Group processes: towards a female perspective

Mellor-Ribet, Elisabeth

Award date:
1986

Awarding institution:
University of Bath

GROUP PROCESSES: TOWARDS A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

Submitted by

ELISABETH MELLOR-RIBET

for the degree of Ph.D.
of the University of Bath

1986

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ABSTRACT

My study started at a theoretical level with an exploration of the self-help movement and at an empirical level with the study of a women's self-help therapy group, which I set up and participated in for two years. The research then developed into an exploration of feminine processes generally and with particular application to feminine theories of group.

The thesis is broad ranging with explorations of visions of alternative society, feminist theories, Jung and the Tao, as well as theories of group behaviour.

Although I set up a project towards the end of the research in order to validate my theoretical developments, the approach to the research and the ideas presented are very personal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest thanks to all those who took part in the research, to my parents, to my friends, especially Gill, Teresa and Sara, for their interest and invaluable encouragement along the way.

Special thanks to:

Judi Marshall and Peter Reason, my supervisors and mentors, for their support throughout the research, their constructive criticisms along the way and for challenging me to give this thesis its present form.

Philip, my husband, for his useful comments on the manuscript, for putting up with my 'ups and downs' and for his tolerance for the days and weeks when the problems of thinking and writing intruded too much on my relationship with him.

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C H A P T E R O N E

INTRODUCTION

I Presenting Myself and My Personal Goals

The present thesis is the product of my needs for challenge both intellectual and personal.

I came to this country a few years ago after graduating in psychology at Paris University, with the intention of completing a Master's degree. At the end of this first piece of research, I decided that I was ready to learn more.

My MSc days provided me with the skills and resources I needed to cope with a bigger piece of research. At the time, while researching into the notion of personal values, I had also dealt with issues which were critical both at a personal and research level. The first one had to do with testing my capacity to live abroad, to learn to speak and think in a foreign language well enough to do research.

The second issue was to examine thoroughly my dissatisfaction with my own culture and system of thoughts I had become aware of the shortcomings of the cartesian positivistic approach when, as all undergraduate, I was taught the experimental method for studying human behaviour.

Such method seeks to establish objective 'truths' about human beings by the means of experiments in a laboratory, by isolating variables and manipulating them in order to establish some generalities of laws on their variations. At first, it had seemed to me that such model was seeking the means by which researchers would obtain the

same results when repeating the experiment rather than actually studying human behaviour. Then, from questioning the experimental approach from a methodological, instrumental viewpoint, I started questioning the philosophy underlying such method. It reflected a mechanistic view of human beings, treating them as objects, splitting and manipulating them, disregarding the meaning they put to their experience preferring to see them as creatures who perceive or memorize.

I was dissatisfied but in a country where philosophers like Descartes and Comte have had such influence on the way people think, where reasoning in terms of causality, proofs, consequences is highly valued, I didn't know where to run instead.

Coming to England, was my way of getting a cultural breath of fresh air, the physical distance I'd put between France and myself, was also allowing me to distance myself mentally from my cultural background in order to assess it and become more open to various streams of ideas.

During my first two years in this country, I learned to speak English reasonably well, I became acquainted with a way of approaching human inquiry which respected the wholeness of people's experience, I also produced a highly spontaneous, chaotic and personal thesis: I was ready to tackle new issues.

I needed to test my ability to sustain energy and attention for my inquiry over a long period of time. I wanted to imerse myself in, and develop in-depth knowledge from my chosen field of research. I

also sought to learn to put my ideas on paper in a more articulate way than I had previously done.

II Developing a Conceptual Focus

I did not have any clear notion of what I wanted to research into when I registered for a PhD - I had the vague idea that I would be dealing with self-development.

I had always been fascinated by the way people grow, learn, develop themselves and prevent themselves or are prevented from doing so. I wanted to give more grounding to the naive ideas I'd developed from observing others, from my everyday reflections and generalisation on the subject and from introspective work.

I gave myself plenty of time to read widely on self-development with the intention of finding out which perspective I would use to set off on my inquiry - I explored with no particular constraints, the fields of altered states of consciousness, of radical education and of humanistic psychology.

Gradually a theme started to emerge from my literature survey, mainly the idea that we do not necessarily need experts to learn and develop ourselves. From Illich (1973) came the idea that we have learnt most of what we know outside school. I also became interested in Freire's (1972) criticisms of education based on "banking" information whereby the teacher's task is to fill the student with information which the students store. He distinguishes

between this type of education which produces dead knowledge and numbs the development of critical consciousness, and education as an "ongoing process" which involves the student and teacher basing their relationship on equality, to establish a dialogue which recognises the ever changing character of reality.

I also felt enthusiastic for the ideas developed by Ernst and Goodison (1981), who believe that we can manage our own psychological and emotional growth, that we can take charge of owr own mental health without having to run to therapists. Their aims are to demystify psychotherapy, to present a critique of different disciplines, pointing out their dangers and what is positive about them in order to allow people who want to take charge of their own development to do self-help therapy.

These different analyses made me aware of the growing self-help movement: groups which are being set up to provide for a variety of needs which are not met by helping professions, people who come together to share their human skills and learn from each other, groups which do not rely on experts whether teachers or therapists, to help them solve their problems. I decided to concentrate on the notion of self-help. Within a few months I had found a research topic which interested me enough to want to explore it in the next years. However, later on in my research, the notion of self-help proved to be only a way into a wider field of research. Within a year I had redefined the issues I wanted to deal with in my inquiry. This process will be described in my presentation of the structures which underlie the present thesis.

III Structures

During my research, I have followed three cycles of research using the model presented by Rowan (1981). The research cycle model is given in Figure 1.1. Rowan sees all research methods in social sciences as following the same basic phase of Being, Thinking, Project, Encounter, Making Sense, Communication and back to Being. However the way researchers deal with each phase differ according to the forms of research they practise, to whether they are alienating for the researcher and/or the subjects, to whether they produce social change. At one end of the continuum is the pure basic research, of the experimental type I was criticising earlier on in this chapter, which treats people like objects; at the other end is the type of research Rowan calls 'participatory' (1981), which is deeply involving and of personal significance for both the researcher and co-researchers, or subjects.

The research cycle becomes a dialectical process of engagement in the world; this involves overcoming the contradictions which occur at each stage, managing inwards and outward movements during the inquiry as well as dimensions of height and depth. Rowan describes the six phases of the research cycle in these terms:

> At the Being Stage: I start resting in my own experience but at a certain point my existing practice seems inadequate - I become dissatisfied (...) So the first negation arises I turn against the old ways of doing things (...) So I move into a phase of needing new thinking
>
> Thinking: in this model, is not the application of a technique to inert material - it is a creative process of invention and testing (...) It is essentially an inward movement, gathering in information; but it is also a processing movement adding and combining the new into unfamiliar relationships. At a certain point (...) Thinking is not enough, I have to make a definite decision as to what to aim for (...) I need to involve others at this stage of the process.

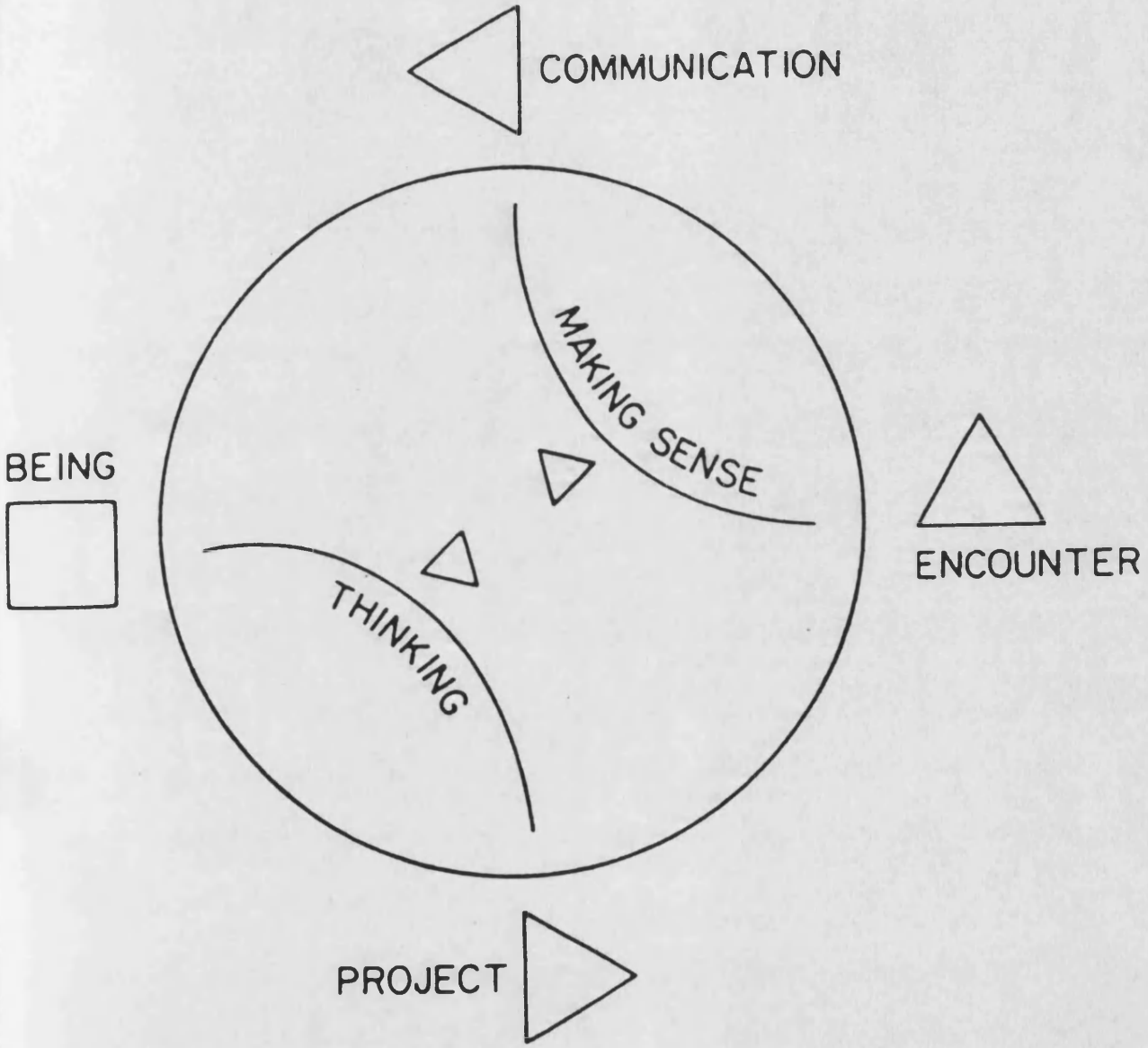

Figure 1.1: The Research Cycle

> **Project:** is essentially an outward movement (...) it will involve some form of bridging distances - to another person, a new field to a different theory on whether it essentially involves plans and decisions (...) But again at a certain point, plans are not what is needed. Action itself is the thing to get into.
>
> **Encounter:** is a movement of height and depth (...) There is some action, some engagement such that some other reality can get through to me. I may get confirmed or disconfirmed and it appears paradoxically, that disconfirmation is actually more valuable as a learning experience than is confirmation (...) The comparison of what is expected with what is actual is potentially very revealing (...) This is the place for test, for experiment, for comparison (...) This goes on until I get to the point of feeling that the action is not enough. I must withdraw and find out what it means. How can I understand what I have been through? (...) What are the contradictions, and can they be resolved?
>
> **Making sense:** involves both analysis and contemplation (...) after I have been immersed in this for some time, I begin to get dissatisfied. Analysis is not enough. I must start telling people what it means and how I have understood what we have been through
>
> **Communication:** is again an outward movement (...) I may communicate with myself about what it all meant for me. I may communicate with others who were not involved with me in it (...) At a certain point however, I do not want to turn into a communicator. I want to get back to real work. Now that I have learnt what I've learnt. I can go back to my field and continue to practice, only now on a higher level.
>
> (Rowan, 1981)

In my research I have followed the sequence in a less organised way than Rowan describes. Although I have followed the cycle three times, I have not given the same importance to each phase within each cycle.

In the first cycle, I set off with the idea of studying self-help groups. In Chapter Two, I survey the literature I encountered on this particular topic. When I became dissatisfied with the type of research carried out on self-help groups, because I could not

picture what was happening in such groups, I decided to set one up myself. I invited a few women to join me in this venture; the account of this experience is given in Chapter Three.

Soon after we started meeting regularly, I started surveying the literature on small group processes, thinking that these works would give me the theoretical background I needed to make sense of conflict and leadership issues which I had expected to appear in our group.

In Chapter Four, I present four theories on group processes and analyse the differences with our experience. I also develop the idea that these theories did not reflect the whole of our experience because we were an all female group, whereas they were derived from male or mixed group situations.

This chapter ends with the idea that, in our group, we had developed 'female processes', that the safe environment we had created for ourselves had fostered the emergence of processes ignored in mainstream literature, which stemmed from our experiences and values as women.

This first cycle is strong in Thinking and Encounter, weak in Communication, to use Rowan's terms. It was a time of testing new ideas, of being challenged by the differences between what I expected would happen in our group and what actually took place, of discovering new ideas to explore. Apart from sharing with my supervisors the produce of my chaotic thinking process I felt that, at this stage, I could not easily communicate my ideas.

During Cycle II, I concentrated on exploring the nature of femaleness in order to make sense and to give more grounding to our group experience. This was an intense period of reflection and discovery of exciting new theories which helped me to redefine my research.

In this cycle, I have approached the field of womens' experience and values from three different perspectives which deal with varied levels of experience and analysis. I have moved from the societal in Chapter Five to the psychological, in Chapter Six, and onto the archetypal and philosophical in Chapter Seven. These approaches complement and illuminate each other. This cycle is strong in Thinking and Making Sense (Rowan, 1981); during this part of the research I moved 'inward' and gave less attention to Encounter.

Cycle III reflects my need to pause, to assess the way I have conducted my research and the validity of my theoretical developments. In Chapter Eight I first deal with the management of the blocks and anxieties I have experienced throughout my research but which became especially acute when the time came to start writing up. In the second part of the chapter, I move 'outward' and consider the issue of empirical validity, of what makes good research when dealing with people.

After a period of retreat, I needed to test the ideas I developed during Cycle II, against criteria of relevance to other people; I needed to present the produce of my own thinking and sense making to others and see what they would make of these ideas.

I organised a workshop for that purpose, inviting people who had an awareness of group processes, to take part in the project. In Chapter Nine, I present the methodology of the workshop. In Chapter Ten, I give the account of what happened during the workshop. Since my hypotheses on the female process were received with mixed feelings, I give at the end of the chapter, tentative explanations of what made the participants so suspicious of my ideas. This cycle is about communicating what I know; it is also strong in Project and Encounter.

In the final chapter (Chapter Eleven), I pull the different strands of my enquiry together in an attempt to present the female process as it is expressed in groups.

Before they move onto the main part of the thesis, I need to tell the readers that my work is not presented in the form of a lineal, continuous piece of writing; I would like to share with them the idea that a particular field of research is not always experienced in book length themes.

I see my 'thesis' as a scrapbook, as a collection of stories of my research, or as starting the same story several times, each time presenting it from a different perspective or level of experience. As I embarked on my exploration of femaleness and the Feminine, besides analysing the theories which are or have been developed in this field, I also felt the need to include my own dreams about potential processes and futures involving these processes. The organic presentation of ideas reflects my own style for doing research. It is based on acknowledging the creative side of chaos,

on accepting ambiguities and contradictions as part of my own sense making. On the whole my thesis is a very personal piece of theoretical development.

CYCLE I

C H A P T E R T W O

SELF-HELP

The notion of self-help is not new: bibliographical research reflects it; for example, "Self-help with illustrations of character conduct and perseverance" was written in 1888 (reprinted in 1986). But it is only recently that social sciences researchers have been studying this phenomenon in the context of group experience, acknowledging that the groups which give support on a "spontaneous" basis can provide alternatives to professional help or institutions. The reason for this recent interest in self-help groups is given by Katz and Bender:

> First it is clearly linked to a general social movement by "outsiders" and consumers, a movement which arises in part from exclusion and discrimination in a larger society, the perceived failure of its institutions to provide maintenance and social support for the needy, the stigmatized, the socially isolated or non-conformist. It also reflects professional developments: a convergence of theory, research and practice in the fields of education, psychology, applied sociology, and medicine - all of which have produced telling evidence for the importance, the value and at times, the indispensability of involving the "consumer", the "client", the "pupil", the "patient" in his own learning or relearning and socialization and in contributing to decisions about his own destiny. (Katz and Bender, 1976).

Because research only started two decades ago, recent literature reflects a variety of hypotheses, speculations and theories in order to explain the origins, function, processes, growth and development of self-help groups. Many social scientists agree that "the self-help phenomenon is incompletely specified" (Wollert, Levy and Knight, 1982) and ask for more research in this field. In this chapter, I will present my excursion into the self-help literature and I will expound several definitions and theories reflecting the aspects of the phenomenon social scientists are concerned with.

I The Origins of the Self-Help Group Movement

In this part, I will concentrate on the concept of the self-help group, (SHG), as it is expressed in the literature. I will first of all summarize the historical background in Western societies.

A few authors trace back SHG to prehistoric times. Hurvitz thinks that our primitive ancestors did not understand the world they lived in nor what controlled it so they believed in spirits who were directly responsible for their fate. They developed, through group experiences, notions of how certain behaviours, thoughts or feelings pleased or displeased the spirits. When a member of the community broke a rule, the spirit would harm the "sinner", other people or animals, or provoke undesirable natural phenomena and the "sinner" would then cease to be a member of the group. Acknowledgement or confession to one's guilt was a way of expiating the harm done by sinning. Confession was more likely to satisfy the spirits when it was a group activity and was followed by repentance and penance:

> Group members learned they could overcome their estrangement from the group and achieve reconnection or "re-ligion" with it through group confession ceremonies. The members were then reconciled with the group. They were thereby enabled to overcome their symptoms, inappropriate behaviour, thoughts and feelings; and function according to group rules again (...) These activities were successful because they fostered group survival and group survival, in turn, reinforced these activities. (Hurvitz, 1976).

Although, according to Hurvitz himself, there is a lot of disagreement over this theory, public confession, repentance and penance are processes used in some types of SHG, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.). A lot more could be said on the religious origins

of SHG, their connection with Judeo-Christian traditions and Western religions, but I'd like to concentrate on more modern history to see if it can explain the origins of SHG as we know them. The religious theories account for the survival value of SHG for the whole community but do not reflect, as such, the notion of support given to an individual.

If we now have a look at the secular origins of the SH phenomenon, we can see that the industrial revolution and the agricultural revolution created an "expanding chaos of social, economic, and health problems for the growing population." (Katz and Bender, 1976). As a result, societies were created in order to help people cope with the stress of industrialism. The Friendly Society was probably the most important one. Its functions was to raise "separate funds for the mutual relief and maintenance of the members in sickness; old age and infirmity." (Nicholls, 1898) It provided loans for the needy and insurance for the sick. This Society was highly organized first in the way local meetings were conducted:

> The committee members must sit in a certain order. The doors must be kept locked. There are careful regulations for the keeping of the box. Members are reminded that intemperance, animosity, profaneness are the pest and vermin that gnaw out the very vitals of all society. (Thompson, 1963).

These societies also set a number of rules and could impose fines on members for drunkenness, physical assaults, gambling, and they organized outings and feasts for their members. However these Societies' efforts to support their poorer members and also to erect themselves into a sort of corporation met the opposition of employers: they were viewed as "schools for politics and class

warfare". (Katz; Bender; 1976). After a long period of political agitation, in reaction to these self organised groups, Parliament passed the Combination Acts declaring illegal all forms of "unions" or associations. The agitation did not cease and working class activities continued. Both unions and Friendly Societies served to politicize their members while emphasizing Christian charity. It is specially true of the Friendly Societies which:

> joined the language of Christian charity and the slumbering imagery of 'brotherhood' with the social affirmations of Owenite socialism. (Thompson, 1963).

Turning to modern times, we can see that as an idea, the Friendly Societies "have taken hold in Great Britain. By 1900 there were 27,000 such societies and still as many as 18,000 in 1945". (Beveridge, 1948). Their services included "housing and building, farm trading and farm cooperatives, working men's compensation, cattle insurance loans and cooperative stores." (Beveridge, 1948). As a sub-culture they fostered the growth of trade unionism.

> In the very secretiveness of the friendly society and its opaqueness under upper-class scrutiny, we have authentic evidence of the growth of independent, working class culture and institutions. This was the sub-culture out of which the less stable trade unions grew and in which many trade union officers were trained. (Thompson, 1963).

Nowadays, the Friendly Societies have taken a political aspect. So, to understand the emergence of the caring aspect of SHG, we must look at the events in XXth century history, which account for the origins of the Self-Help therapy movement.

In the 1930's, the Great Depression which affected our Western societies was said to have "exacerbated the continuing

psychological and/or emotional problems of American people." (Brenner in Hurvitz, 1976). In this time of economic crisis:

> the prevailing systems or psychodynamic psychotherapy were unable to meet the needs of the increasing number of Americans who needed inexpensive and effective psychiatric and psychological services. New psychotherapeutic forms, concepts and practices were necessary. (Hurvitz, 1976).

Another key point in history is World War II and the ensuing crises of the 50's. Newer types of self-help organizations arose which were "patient creation of structures for collective support by many needy, socially stigmatized, disenfranchised or like-minded people, in various social strata." (Katz and Bender, 1976). Organizations of parents of mentally or physically handicapped children were the first to be created after World War II.

Finally, the counter cultural movement of the late 60's (Roszak, 1970) and the revived women's liberation movement prepared the ground for the creation of self-development groups:

> There is evidence that groups formed in the wake of the counter cultural movement of the late 1960s are more inwardly turning than earlier self-help groups. Consciousness raising toward self change in the former - what might be termed the privatization of need - contrasts with the social action and political thrust more characteristic in other periods. (Katz and Bender, 1976).

I think it is time now to consider the definitions and classifications of SHG in order to bring more clarity to the phenomenon in its present form. Whereas history tells us for example that societies in the 18th and 19th centuries were the start for the self-help phenomenon and trade unionism, it would be false to say that trade unions have much to do with self-help groups nowadays or that cooperatives function in the same way as Alcoholics Anonymous.

II Definitions and Classifications of Self-Help Groups

The first definition is offered by Antze. The self-help movement is characterised as:

1) functioning without the benefits of skilled elites.
2) serving very specialized ends and
3) rigid in the type of help they offer. (Antze, 1973).

This definition stresses one of the main features of self-help groups: the absence of professionals or experts but is restricted to groups which apply rigid methods and regulations. It doesn't take into account consciousness raising groups for example. These are member centred and their goal is to "explore and often to seek to change the circumstances of a particular category of persons in society". (Smith, 1980) This term applies more particularly to the women's movement who has used consciousness raising as a tool for change. So, consciousness raising is a form of self-help in the sense that groups were formed when no institution could meet the emerging needs of women, but they have no rules; there is "no 'Bible' for how an initiate is to become a feminist". (Lieberman and Bond, 1976)

Levy presents a more detailed definition. The term self-help can be used to qualify a group if it satisfies five conditions:

1) Purpose: Its express primary purpose is to provide help and support for its members in dealing with their problems and in improving their psychological functioning and effectiveness.
2) Origin and sanction: Its origin and sanction for existence rest with the members of the group themselves rather than with some external agency or authority.
3) Source of help: It relies upon its own members' efforts, skills, knowledge and concern as its primary source of help, with the structure of the

relationships between members being one of peers so far as help giving and support are concerned.

4) Composition: It is generally composed of members who share a common core of life experience and problems.

5) Control: Its structure and mode of operation are under the control of members although they may in turn draw upon professional guidance and various theoretical and philosophical frameworks. (Levy, 1976).

In this definition the notion of a self managed, self controlled group appears again. But the interest of this definition lies in its attempt to understand SHG not as completely closed nor as rejecting the influence of the environment, as it is shown in the fifth criteria.

In this sense the definition given by Katz and Bender can complement Levy's for it also considers the possible influence of SHG on society:

> Self-Help groups are voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment of a special purpose. They are usually formed by peers who have come together for mutual assistance in satisfying a common need, overcoming a common handicap or a life disrupting problem and bringing about derived social and/or personal change. The initiators and members of such groups perceive that their needs are not, or cannot be, met by or through existing social institutions . . . As their efforts become viable, participants in SHG achieve not only subjective gains and private satisfactions: they are also helping to develop alternative structures and strategies that allow the dispossessed and the alienated to survive and to change the values of a "world they never made." (Katz and Bender, 1976).

The problem with definition is that it stresses too much the "sickness" of SHG members. The most extreme view point is given by Hurvitz:

> Peer self-help psychotherapy groups are formed by people who have problems or display "symptoms" behaviour, thoughts and/or feelings currently considered to be d[illegible] presumed to have a psychological and/or[illegible] component. (Hurvitz, 1976)

This definition seems to apply to groups of the A.A. type. Although they present a model of SHG which most people know about they aren't fully representative of the Self-Help phenomenon. All members have to confess that they are sick: the assertion "I'm an alcoholic" is an important part of the ritual each member has to perform in front of the group when he/she joins. The members are considered to be deviant and are put back on the right track in twelve fixed stages. But in other types of therapy oriented SHG, conformity isn't necessarily valued and their members aren't afflicted with severely disabling symptoms or addictions. New types of self-help groups have appeared, created by "not too emotionally distressed" people who are willing to be in charge of their own growth and development. It is certainly true in the case of the consciousness raising movement and of personal development groups. What Liss says about people interested in "new therapies" is relevant to members of these types of self-help groups:

> People interested in these therapies, normally function above average in society. They understand that society's average is "sick" and since they have lived under the wing of society's "average" conditions, they want help. (Liss, 1974).

The awareness that members are not necessarily bonded by the desire to overcome their deviance appears in Levy's classification of SHG which is based upon their purposes and composition.

Type I groups are defined by "their having as their objective some form of conduct reorganization or behavioural control. Their members are in agreement in their desire to eliminate or control some problematic behaviour, and frequently this desire is the only

requirement for membership" (e.g. AA, Weight Watchers).

Type II groups are composed of "members who have common status or predicament which entails some degree of stress, and the aim of these groups is generally the amelioration of this stress through mutual support and the sharing of coping strategies and advice" (e.g. Parents without Partners in the USA, Gingerbread in Great Britain).

Type III groups "might be thought of as survival oriented. They are composed of people whom society has either labelled deviant or discriminated against because of their life style and values or on other grounds such as sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic class or race" (e.g. Consciousness raising groups).

Type IV groups "are made up of members who share a common goal of personal growth, self actualization and enhanced effectiveness in living and loving. In contrast to the other types of groups, there is no core problem which brings members of these groups together; instead there is the shared belief that together they can help each other to live a better life" (e.g. informal, experientially oriented groups which have borrowed in varying degrees from techniques such as Gestalt therapy, T groups, Co-Counselling ...). (Levy, 1976).

Levy doesn't consider the more activist types of groups i.e. the groups whose function is to act upon the existing system. In this

respect, Katz and Bender's classification complements Levy's: they acknowledge that groups which focus on "social advocacy", are part of the Self-Help movement. They identify five types of groups:

1) Groups "that are primarily focused on self-fulfillment or personal growth. These are often referred to by themselves and others as therapeutic".
2) Groups "that are primarily focused on social advocacy. Advocacy includes agitating and education directed at existing institutions, professionals, the public, confrontation, muck raking and social crusading. It can be both on behalf of broad issues, such as legislation, the creation of new services, change in the policies of existing institutions and so on; or it can be on behalf of individuals, families, or other small groups".
3) Groups whose primary focus is "to create alternative patterns for living. These groups may start new living and working arrangements of their own. Individual growth and self-fulfillment is obtained in the process but is not the primary group goal".
4) "'Outcast haven' or 'rock bottom' groups. These groups provide a refuge for the desperate, who are attempting to secure personal protection from the pressures of life and society, or to save themselves from mental or physical decline. This type of group usually involves a total commitment, a living-in arrangement or sheltered environment with close supervision by peers or persons who have successfully grappled with similar problems of their own".
5) Groups of "mixed type which do not have the predominant focus of any of the above, but may share the characteristics of two or more categories". (Katz and Bender, 1976).

Heron is the only writer to come up with a classification that includes "communes" as a type of peer SHG. His definition of such groups; "mutual support outside the aegis of the helping professions", is brief and doesn't make any reference to sickness or life disruptive problems. This aspect is developed in his classification of SHG but I think he is more concerned with those groups which develop positive alternatives to the system. In his typology, I have identified three categories of groups for coping and four categories for growing:

* Physical disability: from congenital defect, later trauma or degenerative disease.
* Social deviance: for those with material such as alcoholism, low assertiveness and social skill, disabling psychological distress.
* Life-crisis: for those in a similar critical situation in their lives such as divorce, separation, single parenthood, rape, redundancy, retirement, bereavement, and many other situations.
* Minority values: for those who wish to support and affirm life-style values that differ significantly from the prevailing norms, such as women's liberation, gay liberation.
* Pressure groups: formed to raise consciousness about some issue such as pollution, over-population, consumer exploitation, iatrogenic disease. Such groups tend to lean on the existing social system from outside it in order to change it.
* Personal development: groups formed for personal growth and flourishing through mutual aid. The best example is co-counselling and its forms of organisation.
* Communes: people who live together on a cooperative basis and

who develop alternatives to the prevailing cultural norms in any one or more of the following areas: ownership of property, ownership of cash, economic subsistence, allocation of roles, decision making, sexuality/intimacy/marriage, child raising, cohabitation and accommodation, education, conflict resolution, personal, interpersonal and transpersonal awareness and growth." (Heron, 1977)

III Helping Processes and Methods

Having presented definitions and classifications, I think the SHG needs to be illustrated by some pieces of research on the helping processes and methods used by SHG and their impact on their members. I will show how empirical research is almost non-existent and the methodology rather inadequate.

Wollert, Levy and Knight's (1982) method of assessing helping processes in SHG is to compare them with ten criteria established by Hill (1975) when he was studying professionally facilitated psychotherapy groups. Having sent their questionnaire to participants in self-help groups of the behavioural control and stress coping types, they come to the conclusion that SHG appear to manifest the majority of mechanisms characteristic of group psychotherapy. The processes which find their counterpart in therapy groups are "catharsis, normalization, explanation, functional analysis, empathy, encouragement of sharing, instillation of hope, observation of all preceding processes within the context of the group." In addition to this comparison they identify the

differences between self-help and group psychotherapy processes. It seems that SHG provide fewer opportunities for reality testing:

> ... the aspect of reality testing referred to as "interpersonal learning" which is manifested in such activities as feedback and confrontation is de-emphasized in SHG. (Wollert, Levy and Knight, 1982).

What I found most interesting in this piece of research was not the presentation of the results but who the respondents were. Though I was provided with some information on processes and techniques I felt that I was learning little about them and I was put off by the rigidity of the methods used: questionnaire cum Mann and Whitney U statistical comparison. But I was intrigued by the fact that most respondents were women and that:

> the surveyed self-help groups emphasized supportive and expressive processes while avoiding confronting processes. (Woolert, Levy and Knight, 1982).

At the time I just registered this information, I mentally labelled it "self-help is a female phenomenon and women are good at giving support" but I did not give it my full conscious attention. Later on, this category was to become one major area I explored. But I am anticipating, I just want to say at this stage that while I was focusing on processes, I was letting other ideas simmer until I could decide what would become the core aspect of the research.

Let me go back to my literature survey on processes and techniques used in self-help groups. According to the literature it seems that members tend to apply techniques drawn from everyday life with which they are familiar with and which they can easily use, in this way avoiding going beyond the limits of their skills. (Wollert, Levy

and Knight, 1982) Elaborate techniques do not seem to be an important factor of personal change. This was expressed by the people who answered the questionnaire mentioned above:

> From what self-help members say, elegant theoretical formulations, systematic behavioural techniques and complex cognitive restructuring are not essential components of change. What is essential for change, however, is meeting a core of personal and social needs for constructive advice, emphatic communication, acceptance, self-expression and understanding, and for developing an enhanced sense of personal responsibility, hope, control, and self worth. (Wollert, Levy and Knight, 1982).

Processes which are not used in traditional helping techniques, are emphasized in self-help groups like for example giving advice. These methods and their efficiency are studied by Levy. For a while, he or other members of the research team attended various meetings: AA, Consciousness Raising groups, the American equivalent to Weight Watchers and Gingerbread. After observing from two to six sessions, the researchers interviewed a few group members and distributed questionnaires to others. Both methods covered the same issues, i.e. group members' "attitudes toward the group, descriptions of how the group operates, the extent to which certain methods are used by the group and what the respondents believed was most and least helpful in the group meetings". (Levy, 1976). Levy derived a list of eleven processes which account for the variety of methods and activities of the groups studied. I'm not sure what importance was given to the interviews and questionnaires compared to the reports the observers wrote after attending each session. In the analysis of the processes, no direct reference is made to the interviewees' comments so they seem to be based more on the researcher's speculations rather than on the participants' viewpoint.

The processes are listed under two main dimensions: processes with a behavioural focus or with a cognitive focus:

A Processes with a behavioural focus: here the focus is directly on members' behaviours. Levy defines four behavioural processes:

1) The first process is concerned with "both direct and vicarious social reinforcement for the development of ego syntonic behaviour and the elimination of problematic behaviours". The best known examples of operation of this process can be observed in the praise, applause and sometimes medals people receive in groups such as Weight Watchers. Levy notices that "membership itself in the group becomes rewarding ... It thus seems that reinforcement received from one's peer within a self-help group for an action may be more effective than that received from a therapist within a dyadic relationship."

2) The second process relates to "training, indoctrination and support in the use of various kinds of self-control behaviours." This includes asking members to monitor their own behaviour. They're given advice as "to how and what they can do to control the problematic behaviour or avoid situations likely to cue the behaviour." For example, people with weight problems may be told to avoid thinking or talking about the pleasure they derived from food.

3) The third process is the "modelling of methods of coping with stresses and changing behaviour". Members who have been successful in dealing to some degrees with their problems "tell their story".

4) The fourth one has to do with "providing members with an agenda of (and rationale for) actions they can engage in to change their social environment". This process operates in two ways to help individuals in distress:

> First it externalizes the source of their distress, and second, it can result in an actual modification of their social environment so that it is more supporting and less stressful. In part this process also deals with the powerlessness which some people feel in coping with their environment; but most importantly, it directs their attentions outward from themselves, helping them view their problems in a broader context - a realistic context in many cases - rather than only in intrapersonal or intrapsychic terms. (Levy, 1976).

This process can be identified in certain CR groups.

B Processes with a cognitive focus: These, in general, correspond to the interpretation of critical events in the members' lives, how they think about their problems, their beliefs about themselves, others and the world.

There are seven processes which capture the various methods and tactics observed by Levy.

1) "Providing members with a rationale for their problem or distress and for the group's way of dealing with it, thereby removing their mystification over their experiences and increasing their expectancy for change and help."

Whether the rationale has firm theoretical support or not is not really the point. What is important is its effectiveness: its function is to provide "a framework within which they [members]

can see order and change as possibilities where previously they were experiencing chaos and fixity - a sense of being trapped."

2) "Provision of normative and instrumental information and advice." There is a lot of this type of information exchanged during group meetings. This process is said to be "the most prevalent" in SHG (e.g. Weight Watchers are told how to avoid the temptation of between meal snacks).

3) "Expansion of the range of alternative perceptions of members' problems and circumstances and of actions which they might take to cope with their problems." This process emphasizes the importance of the group; of the influence the group members have on one another:

> The presence of three or five of ten other members all sharing with a fellow member their perceptions of his problem and what he might do about it, would seem bound to increase his freedom of movement. (Levy, 1976).

4) "Enhancement of members' discriminative abilities regarding the stimulus and event contingencies in their lives". This process occurs when the group discuss, at a more general level, the problems of one of their members. This was observed by Levy in CR groups. There was a discussion in a women's support group about when it is appropriate to ask your husband for help. Thus he remarks:

> As group members attempt to understand and analyze one another's experiences . . . they begin to develop better analytic and discriminative abilities, thereby making it possible for them to gain better control over their behaviours and environment. (Levy, 1976).

5) "Support for changes in attitudes toward one's self, one's own behaviour and society." This happens when people see their problems in a new light and start trying out new and more

appropriate behaviour.

6) "Reduction or elimination of a sense of isolation or uniqueness regarding members' problems and experiences through the operation of social comparison and consensual validation." This refers to the discovery that one is not alone, is not unique in having a certain type of problems.

7) "The development of an alternative or substitute culture and social structure within which members can develop new definitions of their personal identities and new norms upon which they can base their self-esteem." Levy refers to Goffman to say that many members of SHG have "spoiled identities", whether labelled alcoholics, mental patients ..., therefore one function of the group is to provide members "an opportunity to build a new identity, and hence, a new base from which they can face the world and their predicaments."

As I said the aims of this typology are to give a detailed analysis of specific processes and of their efficiency. Yet something is missing. For example, Levy acknowledges the influence the groups have on their members (reduction of a sense of isolation, advice giving, support) he does not really explore the interpersonal relationships among the people in the groups, nor the different stages of development of these SHG and he completely ignores emotional learnings. The situation is rationalized by Lieberman and Borman in these terms:

> ... Among the vast majority of self-help systems there is not an exploration of interpersonal or symbolic relationships among the people in the group, and the use of the group as a social microcosm is not only unemphasized but overtly deemphasized. (Lieberman and Borman, 1976).

At this point, I found it difficult to understand the attitude of these researchers. They regret that so little is known about the Self-Help phenomenon but when they undertake any form of field work they seem to stick to their own speculations and rationalizations. This, in turn, stops them from getting any in depth knowledge of the phenomenon. I faced the same problem when I dealt with the leadership and group dynamics issues. In the next part I will present the little information I have been able to gather in this field.

Katz and Bender in a chapter on "group structures and formats in self-help organization" content themselves with quoting Bion (1961) on the "authority figures in SHG" issue who sees leadership as "the facilitation of group skill in diagnosing its own state of emotion" (Bion, 1961). Katz and Bender also mention that there is "a reduced leadership" in SHG:

> No leader can be put in a position whereby he alone administers material or psychic assistance to others but claims none need be administered to him." (Katz and Bender, 1976).

But I have not found a discussion on the contradictions between leadership in SHG (even reduced) and the peer principle which is often mentioned in literature. Nothing is said on the motives of the individuals who set up such groups. These issues came up strongly during a two day workshop on "Self-Help for Self-Help groups" which I attended because I was thinking of starting a group. The literature didn't provide enough perspective on what was happening in SHG so I felt that the best way to learn more about them from the "inside" was to set up a group. I was also interested

in what participants had to say about their experience as I'd had enough of dry information, categories and definitions which these social scientists were eager to produce. The people I met there had all started a self-help group. They were well aware of the practical aspects involved in getting a group together and had obtained all the necessary background information relevant to their field of interest whether unemployment, Buddhism or cancer. But they were left in the dark as to how to deal with interpersonal relationships within the group and the leadership issue. Most of the two days were devoted to exploring these issues and were valuable as we were left to decide how we wanted to approach these issues. After the workshop, I became acutely aware that the academic literature was reflecting a rosy picture somehow promoted by well established self-help groups. What they claimed they could do, their views on how they could change people's perception of the world was merely simplistic and excessive if they did not pay attention to less visible issues than those who brought people together in the first place.

So at the end of my literature review I was well "informed", I knew about the evolution and diversification of SHG over several decades from the rigid AA to growth and development groups. But I felt that most pieces of research were rather timid and authors confused over what method was needed to understand the self-help phenomenon. Levy calls his classification of self-help groups "intuitive". A few of them start wondering whether such research should not involve participants in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon.

This is reflected by Lieberman and Borman:

> We believe that models of meaningful collaboration can be developed and executed, but that they will involve the researcher in activities that do not entirely fit with an archetypal view of what research is and how one conducts it. The kind of research findings that emerge and the way in which they are learned, we believe, will be the product of a genuine partnership between the researcher and members of the self-help group. Realistic collaborative arrangements that involve important pay offs to the groups, as well as a science, are essential. Such close collaboration may help to translate research questions and findings into language and concepts intelligible to the self-help groups. This may also be one important way to narrow the usual gap between research findings and implementation. (Lieberman and Borman, 1976).

I left these social scientists agonising over whether collaborative research is orthodox or not and moved onto exploring self-help from an empirical and hopefully collaborative point of view. For me there is no doubt as to what method brings the most insights into the development of a self-help group.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

WOMEN SELF-HELP THERAPY

The second path I took to make sense of the research was an experiential one.

I said before that I was interested in studying the notion of self-development in the context of a self-help group. This interest, linked to the belief that people can manage their own psychological and emotional growth without being dependent on an expert, made me decide to set up a self-help therapy group. I thought I would be contradicting myself, if I was only going to read about self-development and not be involved in any kind of growth activity.

Furthermore, I found it difficult to understand how small groups fostered changes in their participants, how they worked in terms of dynamics and processes without having had myself a long term group experience. What I had read on groups was often lifeless. Typologies of groups, categorizations of processes were helpful at first but did not portray the richness and complexities which I thought would accompany any group experience. I had to gain a knowledge of groups from the "inside", as a participant, in order to be more grounded in my dialogue with the literature.

It was not very difficult to find people who were interested in the idea of being actively involved in self-help therapy. I only approached female friends because I thought a mixed group would hinder self-disclosure or at least that it would take a long time for such a group to reach the necessary level of intimacy which was so important if we were to have a valuable experience.

Four women (Laura, Caroline, Isabel, Clare) decided to join me in this venture after a preliminary meeting that I had arranged to present the idea of setting up a SHG. What I saw as my first task, before making any decision to start a group was to dispel the myths and negative connotations which surround the term "therapy". I had often noticed that mentioning it was enough to provoke defensive reactions in most people. They would make jokes about "shrinks" or immediately assume that therapy was for "mad" people and therefore not applicable to their own lives. My explaining that we all had the potential to heal ourselves and help each other and that in itself discovering this potential was therapeutic, was meant to help the future members to get gradually used to the idea that therapy should not be frightening and that anybody could benefit from it whether mentally ill or not. If we were not going to be ruled by experts, it did not mean that we were going to reject them either. We could benefit from the knowledge found in books written by therapists specializing in self-help therapy. Therefore I insisted that we needed some of those techniques which were accessible to all of us and easy to master if our meetings were to become more than a social occasion.

In saying that, I had already set up the level of involvement that I thought would be indispensable if we wanted to get something out of this risky but exciting experience. As I was the initiator of this group, I had to face up to the fact that I was accrediting myself with the facilitator role. So before the first session I was already struggling with the notion of leadership. The literature on self-help stressed the importance of being peers, of reducing

leadership and here I was setting up criteria by which we should function and matching self-help requirements with therapy. I was wondering whether facilitating a group would imply that I would be seen as the "leader" in the sense of a domineering person, especially as I had some book knowledge on the various new therapies and had also taken part in a few two day therapy groups.

At first, I naively thought that I could share this knowledge with the others. Then if there was enough space in the group for everyone to contribute, if we spent some time to develop some trust and intimacy, if eventually we all shared the same knowledge then we could all take responsibility for running the group. The style I wanted to adopt had been described by Heron:

> F (the facilitator) specifies the objectives and trains members to become self-directing in their learning: members contract into accept or provisionally entertain the presented objectives and then to learn how to become independent of F in realizing them ... F's role becomes progressively self-eliminating. (Heron, 1977).

These ideas were so neat and straightforward that I thought it would not too difficult to reach self-directiveness. I expected anyway that my position would then be challenged.

However my account will show that the process has not been as smooth and flowing as I had thought. What will follow now is the story of our group, an edited version of the diary I have kept after each session. It includes my own thoughts and struggles with the roles of leader and facilitator and also comments and reflections made by the other women. While I am writing this, I fear that I may be

betraying the group by disclosing an experience which has been so private and intense and also failing to translate this experience in a way which will do justice to the process: to how we related, how we expressed our emotions, to what it was really like to meet weekly for one and a half hours over the year. As our story is now becoming public, I can say that the participants were happy with my decision to write about the group. I gave them an earlier version of this chapter to read, we discussed its main themes which are the ones I am now going to develop. Finally, I have changed the names of the women to respect their anonymity.

I Getting Started

In the few hours which preceded the first meeting I became increasingly worried and nervous. Something was at stake: an experience which I regarded as important was going to take place and I felt it was my responsibility to be able to communicate the excitement I experienced. The success or failure to catch their interest in the first session would determine whether the group would survive or not. I had doubts whether I would be skillful enough to do so. I had already decided that the first session had to be quite structured, that we would try out a few exercises described in various self-help therapy books (Ernst and Goodison, 1981); (Schiffman, 1971); (Rainwater, 1979). I had to manage some balance between two strong contradictory messages on self development expressed by Southgate and Randall and Heron. The former were saying:

> There is also a contradiction in studying that the understanding you gain from books can also be used as an intellectual defence: the more you know, the more you can defend against. (Southgate and Randall, 1978).

While the latter was claiming:

> I don't believe in personal growth which is conceptually blind. (Heron, 1977).

I expected the others to see me as lecturing them on self development, that they would see it as dull and meaningless. But I had circulated some books on therapy beforehand and realized that they had not read any of them but a two page article on SHG. (Spare Rib, December 1981). So I decided that it was my responsibility to introduce them to a few fundamental ideas as they were not ready yet to do so themselves. I realized that I didn't have to lecture them on therapy: I could make everything more lively by talking about my own experience.

We started rather quickly for we all "knew" each other, by going round the circle and stating our expectations about the group. Then I stressed the importance of learning to listen to others in order to get away from the social chat pattern we were used to. In everyday life interaction, people often don't listen to each other, they are just waiting for a gap in the conversation to barge in with their own opinions, advice and so on. In my own experience, the concept of learning to listen sounded quite easy but when I worked on it, I noticed that it was incredibly difficult to restrain the inner conversation while listening to someone else. We then split into two sub-groups and practiced giving total and clear attention

to the woman who was talking about what had happened to her during the week. This exercise generated some energy but also anxiety as we discussed afterwards what it was like to do this. In my case, I had to stop myself from rehearsing the introduction to the next exercise. Some women noticed that while listening they were afraid of not being able to express themselves as well as the others, of boring them. They felt they had to "seduce" the listener by making their account as interesting as possible.

In the second part of the session I focused on other growth ground rules and more specifically on not trying to make everything better when someone faces some difficulties in her life. Our immediate reaction is often to smooth away the problem, we must learn that being supportive means recognising that the other person is suffering and allowing her to release her own feelings. I also explained that it was important to own up and take responsibility for our own feelings and to avoid generalizing emotional experiences which are really our own. For example instead of saying "Most people feel embarrassed in that kind of situation" we should say "I feel embarrassed in this situation". Then we split up again in small groups. We told our partners for about five minutes about the situations which had made us feel bad in the past week. The listener's task was to notice each time she felt like consoling the other woman or how uneasy she felt while listening to her. This exercise was found useful by everybody and in Caroline's own words "mind opening". As for Laura, she became frightened by the nature of her own feelings and declared that she had "bigger problems than the others and I talk too much". She was also worried that she disclosed her feelings too much in this first session while the

others were just experimenting with and enjoying the novelty of the exercises. At the end of the meeting all the women were incredibly enthusiastic. They made plans for future sessions, talked a lot about how peaceful they felt. Caroline wondered if we could "have more than one session per week". I enjoyed this euphoria but deep down I was suspecting that in the next week the excitement might be followed by a colder assessment of what had been done and by doubts and fear of dealing with one's own problems. I was expecting the group to be more defensive against the therapy process. Before the second meeting Laura told me "I see my problems like an iceberg, is it worthwhile to work on them as I might discover more and more?" What happened in the sessions will show that I was right to anticipate more difficult meetings.

In the second session we faced our first crisis. Laura arrived looking glum and feeling depressed but willing to talk about what upset her so much: her three year relationship with a violent man. She was brave enough to break up with him recently, having had to deal with emotional blackmail on his part. She lived in fear of his coming to university to avenge himself for being "jilted". She also dreaded seeing him again when she was at her parents' and being hooked one more time on his blackmail. Finally she was distressed by painful memories of the relationship. The atmosphere in the group was in complete contrast to the ambience which prevailed in our previous meeting. Everyone was now quiet and withdrawn. Laura's problems were not new to us, she had already confided them to each of us long before our meetings started. She probably felt safe enough to express her feelings and to work on them, even if she was not so sure what it would imply. I did not expect Isabel and

Caroline's reaction. They were pushing Laura to work on her problems as if they wanted her to get rid of her problems quickly. I wrote in my diary "Do they want Laura to sort herself out or are they just angry and fed up with listening yet again to Laura's problems?" I would have liked to have confronted them on this but at the time though I had no confidence in my own hunches. I did not say anything as I was too unsure of my position in the group.

Since the words "emotional blackmail" were punctuating Laura's explanation, I suggested that she could use a role play to rehearse what she would tell Steve should she meet him again. I asked her to think about what he'd say in this situation and she came up with "don't leave me" and "you don't care about me anyway". I also asked her to choose somebody to act Steve's role. She chose Caroline. Busy as I was introducing the technique and showing the relevance of role playing real life events, I did not notice that the group morale was getting lower by the minute. Clare and Isabel were completely silent, as for Caroline she categorically refused to take part in the role play. "I can't be Steve" she shrieked. So I role played him. Within a short time, Laura was in tears as all the bad memories were emerging again. When she was better, we all shared our feelings. Isabel was terribly nervous: all along she had wanted "to make it all better". The others started to see new dimensions to Laura's problems but were still being pushy when they decided that another meeting should be organized the next day to allow her to work more on her problems. As before, I did not dare voice my doubts about such a decision, about the fact that we might have wanted to get rid of the heaviness and depth Laura had brought to the group, while she was working she forced us to consider our own

unresolved problems, fears and pains. I shared my doubts with her later on, in private, and she admitted to feeling pressurized.

The next day, she refused to work more on her relationship, she feared to be emotional again. Though we all told her that it was O.K. to be as emotional as she wanted, she decided that it was too early to have another session like the previous day. It suddenly struck me that I had overlooked the importance of our relationships within the group. I said before that we all knew each other socially before starting our sessions. In my case, I knew Clare quite well and was very close to Laura. But instead of easing the process of becoming a group, I realized that it was difficult to do therapy with friends. We had to meet again on a different basis.

Laura had opened up very quickly and was now embarrassed and unwilling to carry on exploring her feelings. The others were silent except for Caroline who was becoming impatient when she realized that Laura was not going to be the focus of our meeting. She declared that she wanted to do something because she felt she did not get much out of the group. When asked for suggestions, for what she wanted to do she became defensive and said that she didn't like to talk about herself. I was puzzled by the contradiction in her demand, she wanted to do something but did not want to get personally involved. I challenged her on that but she repeated that she didn't and had never liked talking about herself. She felt that anyway people were not listening to her in social situations. I thought that she was somehow asking for some attention and suggested that she could say more about that or that we could role play a situation in which two of us would have a conversation ignoring any

of what she would say while she would try to make herself heard. As soon as we started the role play she gave up and said: "I'm frightened by what I've seen Laura doing" and ended up saying that "the situation was faked anyway". Then Isabel started to "rescue" and protect her and probably herself by changing the level of the discussion, by making generalizations.

After this meeting, I wrote two pages of advice to myself planning what needed to be done next. I decided that we had to approach any form of therapy more gradually. Laura had dominated the group and ended up scaring herself and others. It was too early for this "big-bang" approach. I was feeling guilty, I thought I had pushed them too much. Maybe it wasn't appropriate at this stage to work on ourselves even with such a light technique as role play, which Laura didn't take lightly anyway. I was also aware that so far Clare had not taken any time in the group, that Isabel was not getting involved and that Caroline was strongly resisting the method. So far, none of them had challenged me and I would have liked them to share the leadership. But then I shouldn't force them to adopt a behaviour that seemed only appropriate to me at the time: if they were happy with a led group why should this change? It was easy to write this to myself less so to actually convince myself that I should lead the group.

In order to get everybody involved, help self disclosure and give the group some direction, I decided that the next session would be used to write contracts. We would write what we hoped to achieve or improve in our lives with the help of the group. Writing up contracts indeed allowed everybody to participate and to discover

some common themes in our contracts which we could all start to explore.

These themes were in Isabel's case "wanting to achieve greater self-confidence and knowledge of myself, more ability to cope on my own without needing constant backing, (wanting) to stop doing things which I feel obliged to do yet to the stage when I really don't want to do them but feel a sort of social responsibility to do."

Clare saw the group as giving her "fresh air, time out, the opportunity to stand back a bit from what's going on at home/at the university; to talk about it and to look at it in new ways. New ideas, fun, excitement(?). Help in dealing with specific issues or worries that come up from time to time (at the moment, these are about getting my degree, and what next in the autumn - a big decision.)"

Laura's contract was "almost about undertaking a life-long task": she expected to gain "more self-control - greater understanding of myself: ability to work hard, no compulsive eating or drinking, no nervousness when meeting people, control when facing stressful situations; it's related to parents and also to being alone which I can't stand very much. Therefore an independence from my parents and being able eventually to have an open and honest relationship with them without the repressions, guilt and hidden feelings of my childhood - I want more self-confidence."

Caroline didn't write anything but expressed the need to become more self-confident.

As for me, I wanted to learn to live now and to stop worrying about the future. If I stopped torturing myself with all sorts of depressing ideas then I would gain more confidence in myself.

The meeting ran smoothly, I explored my compulsive smoking with the Gestalt "hot chair" technique, a kind of role play where one person is enacting different parts of a problem or a situation, giving them a voice and a shape and establishing a dialogue between them. Differentiation between the elements of the problem explored is reinforced by assigning each of them a place or a chair in the room. The individual moves from one place to another depending on which element of the problem needs to express itself, to address a statement, or to respond to the other parts. It was important for me to put myself in this situation as I didn't want the others to think that I was the therapist, that I had already sorted out most of my problems. I didn't only work on myself for that reason, it was equally important for me to understand why I was intoxicating myself so much ...

At the end of the meeting, I felt more confident that we had found an appropriate way to get started. As well as learning about the potential danger of starting self-exploration too quickly I also recognized that so far I had facilitated the group in a way which was similar to my style for doing research. The structure had so far been loose, we took all sorts of directions and ways to get started. It was very chaotic but in a trial-error way we managed to find a certain balance.

II Consciousness Sensing: The Group as a Space for "Being"

After the contract session we moved to a second phase in the group development marked by Caroline leaving the group. Half an hour before we were to meet, she came to see me, to tell me that she was leaving because she had "too much work" and that "the group was artificial". I invited her to come to tell this to the others promising that nobody would force her to stay but she refused. Her final blunt comment before she went was "it's all right for people like you or Laura who have problems" (so much for my fear of being seen as the "sorted out" one) I felt angry, hurt and puzzled by her attitude. I found it very hard not to take what she had said as an attack, not so much of my position in the group, but of myself as a person. I would have liked to know why self-therapy had scared her so much and challenged her on her implying that she didn't have any problem. I never did this, for a while I even avoided her. I was later told that Caroline had suffered from and was struggling with anorexia nervosa/bulimia and accepted that we might not have had the necessary skills to cope with the situation had she managed to open up, nor that it was appropriate to seek to break the system of defences she had built to protect herself.

The result of her leaving was not as I thought the collapse of our group but Isabel's sudden involvement in the group. For the first time, she opened up and confessed that it was difficult for her to be in the group with Caroline, who was also her flatmate, especially as she thinking of moving out to live with her boyfriend. She was worried by Caroline's reaction when she would tell her that. For two hours we shared and offered our experience to Isabel who was

worried of committing herself in a relationship. We asked ourselves why we equated living with somebody with losing our independence and why at the same time we dreaded the pain associated with breaking up or failing at keeping a relationship going. It was as if we both wanted and rejected closeness and security. We were also alienated by normal people's way of life. Clare described how she found it more and more difficult to communicate with her friends: "My friends are normal, they want money, a big house, a man on a string."

The meeting was good, everyone had contributed something to the discussion. But I was starting to worry about our inability to find a structure to how we started and finished each session. We were not planning how we'd use our two hours and would finish when someone had to go without paying attention to the unfinished business. I also had a great difficulty with making sense out of our breaking a therapy rule: "Don't offer your experience" (Southgate and Randall, 1978) and noticing that it was exactly what Isabel asked for and needed at the same time. At the same time we were developing skills at "owning" what we felt and did when we were talking about an experience. It was quite paradoxical that by breaking a growth ground rule we were respecting another one.

A week later, I had mustered enough strength to talk openly about my confused feelings towards the shape our meetings were taking and my fear that we would end up with a discussion group. I wanted reassurance that we were here because we wanted to do therapy. Laura's immediate answer was: "We don't know enough about techniques". I didn't let her get away with such a feeble excuse. I suggested that she could read about therapy, that there wasn't

anything difficult about the techniques. Then she admitted to being scared of getting into something emotional again, but she felt that later on she would be able to work on her relationship with Steve again. Clare explained that she'd always been careful to preserve her privacy, she wasn't very used to talking in depth about herself and justified herself by explaining that she'd had a lonely childhood. She felt that doing therapy was contradicting her need for privacy but if she was given time then she might give it a try. She had also had a negative experience of a growth group which left her very suspicious of the methods used.

On that day, Isabel was "ill", and for a while she will miss every other session. She will use this pattern to avoid letting go. I will come back to this later on.

I understood their message, they were all asking for time and a breathing space (Isabel was doing that in her own way) before getting involved in anything deeper. I also acknowledged that we needed to recover from Caroline's departure, though we didn't seem to "mourn" her leaving. We needed to adjust to being in a smaller group, to develop trust and intimacy (which I thought wouldn't take more than one or two sessions). We were avoiding therapy not in the destructive, paranoid way described in the literature, (see Chapter 4), but because we needed a nurturing phase. I had underestimated its importance.

It is easy for me to describe this phase now that I've had some time to look back on it. At the time, I couldn't stop worrying about the consequences of taking such a long time to warm up to the process.

I was also confused by being given responsibility for introducing the techniques. I recognized feelings of frustration and impatience, as I wanted to get deeply involved in the therapy process. I was prevented from doing so by the women's wish to stay at a light level and more so by my belief that what I was doing had more impact on the others than anybody else. They were still turning to me for guidance and advice. At the beginning of our sessions I had wanted to show that I would work on myself like anybody else in the group. Now my fantasy was that if I explored something with the help of the group then I would put them off therapy for life. I would anyhow be too embarrassed. As long as they were dependent on me, I could not fulfill my needs. I was still waiting for them to challenge my position in the group and assert theirs.

I now recognize my own pattern for dealing with certain situations in my life. I've got a taste for risk and get quickly immersed in whatever requires deep emotional involvement, like research. This level of emotions is unsuitable in everyday life and it's often difficult for me to find a balance between complete openness and complete silence into which I also easily retreat.

To go back to the group, I have learned to relax to tune myself to the soft process of the group and to enjoy our conversations without wondering whether we were avoiding getting involved. It struck me that we had created our own private space for "being", for expressing who we were and that I could have spoilt it by pushing the group into "doing therapy" too early. For a while we will move from phases of sharing our experience, or being phase, to working on

it, or doing phase. I also realized that the term conversation was inaccurate, it couldn't describe the quality of what was taking place in our group. I thought the term consciousness-raising though loaded with all sorts of connotations was more appropriate. I had payed too much attention to each individual, to who was resisting therapy and how I had also been oblivious to how we were managing to become a group. In terms of learning to practice self-help what was happening at the group level was just as important as what was occurring at the individual level. Being able to surrender to the process of "being" and to appreciate its value meant finding a comfortable place in the group.

First I experimented with my position as I was puzzled by their dependence on "me as a facilitator". I then denied that they needed me at all: I was unable to attend a session once and told everybody that I didn't see why they couldn't meet without me. I was surprised to find out that they had cancelled the meeting altogether. Obviously they still needed me to provide some structure. The group was too young, they couldn't yet interact freely with each other.

Another time, I decided to be completely silent. I didn't want to impose my ideas on what was "good" behaviour in a SHG. Eventually, I acknowledged that if I believed in the peer principle I had to accept their dependence on me instead of forcing them or even manipulating them to become a leaderless group. I couldn't force them to be free. I had to present a constant behaviour in the group rather than shying away from the leadership issue, which seemed to be only a live issue for me anyway. I wanted to, but gave them no

chance to confront their own feelings towards a facilitator/leader figure. I had to become less self conscious about everything I did and said and stop worrying about it. I didn't immediately notice the connection between my pattern of facilitating the group and what I hoped to improve in my life with the help of the group when I was writing my contract weeks before.

Before writing this chapter, I thought it would be difficult to talk about the group from two positions: as the facilitator and researcher into processes of our group and as a participant to this same group. These positions needed to be integrated as each of them influenced and interacted with the other one. This chapter has lost in structure what it has gained in expressing that a valid point of view for doing research encompasses the analysis of patterns of functioning in everyday life and the assessment of their influence on the researcher. Let me now go back to our group and to how, while I was busy with my own contradictions, the women were making attempts at giving a meaning to the experience and at becoming more autonomous in the group. Earlier on, I explained that for a while we oscillated between phases of "doing" and phases of "being". They told me how much they valued the latter. Laura alleviated my anxiety by stating: "Though we're not doing anything, I've learned a lot". At the next session, Clare brought a guided fantasy exercise and asked us if we'd like to have a go at it. For the first time, in the life of the group somebody else was taking charge of running a meeting. On that day we were willing to do something and experimented with the guided fantasy. While we were giving feedback to each other, we all voiced a feeling of self awareness and of well being. This was certainly fostered by the energy we got from doing

the exercise but was mostly revealing of the personal process we were all going through.

Laura, always willing to share her experience with us, at that moment felt like telling us how by simply belonging to the SHG made her think about her relationship with Steve in new ways and admitted to wanting to deal with the problem instead of being forever depressed about it:

> I've had possibility of talking to Steve through the group. I have recognized the nature of the problem and the conflict within myself, the depression will go. Now I have to stand up to him or at least make a choice ... I've enjoyed the guided fantasy. I have this feeling of self-acceptance: this is me.

A week later, we shifted back to consciousness raising. It would have been a fruitful meeting if it hadn't been for Isabel missing yet again the session. Her appearing/disappearing was hard for me to understand. She was almost an outsider and wasn't getting involved in the life of the group. She had opened up once when Caroline had left and then had withdrawn again. I thought that she wanted to leave the group but didn't want to openly say so. She was the last one to be wary of our group, even Clare who was reluctant to do therapy was getting involved in the group more personally. (She had brought the guided fantasy and been in charge of a session, she has also experimented with the Gestalt hot chair in an attempt to decide whether she should give up her degree and leave university.) I remembered my contract and my decision to stop worrying about my position in the group. I was then ready to challenge Isabel next time I saw her. But Laura took the initiative to confront her herself; she simply said: "We need to give you some

time Isabel, we're doing all the talking." To which Isabel replied: "I don't know about that ... I'm a good listener".

We didn't have much time to comment on that. We had reached the end of the meeting and still, at that stage, had not set up any structure to cope with the unfinished business that may have emerged during a meeting. But the following week Laura hadn't given up on Isabel, she insisted that she took some time in the group and that she didn't have to discuss a big problem. I don't know how much Isabel's decision to mention her relationship with Caroline restimulated feelings we experienced when she left, but as it happened, we locked ourselves into a negative "being" cycle. This phrase will become clearer with the presentation of the full session. The issue Isabel was facing was in itself non threatening for the group. She explained how Caroline made her feel unwelcome. They shared a room and Caroline wanted to be on her own the following academic year and expected Isabel to move out. She didn't want to do that and as she'd decided not to live with her boyfriend she didn't mind sharing her place with somebody else. Under the circumstances she thought Caroline had to leave, not her. But she couldn't bring herself to say anything, she didn't want Caroline to get angry nor lose her friendship and she was feeling guilty. Laura suggested role playing the situation but Isabel had great difficulty in stating clearly what her needs were without considering Caroline's, what she might think or want.

In our group, we had usually given support to who ever was working and were non judgemental of her reactions. Then we would share similar experiences not to minimise the woman's problem but rather

as a way to present her with alternative perspectives on a common experience. On that day, this degenerated. Laura couldn't stop herself from giving her opinion on how Caroline would react which reinforced Isabel's guilt. Caroline was given protection even if she wasn't in the group any more. As I was still angry with Caroline for leaving the group, I told her that Caroline was manipulating her to make her feel guilty, that she was using emotional blackmail in order to get what she wanted. I realized that this sort of interpretation was not only unfair but also very unhelpful. As the meeting was reaching its end I asked Isabel to state exactly what she wanted without thinking of Caroline's possible reactions and to think about ways to obtain what she wanted.

I left the group feeling confused, it was only after the end of the meeting that I made sense of what had happened. I realized that we had encouraged Isabel to open up and then reacted to her in a very unsupportive way, we'd failed to see her point of view. A week later I shared these feelings with her in front of the group. Isabel assured us, saying that the session had been all right for her, that it'd been helpful and was almost apologizing for having talked too much about such a trivial problem.

The meeting was low in energy. Laura took almost the entire session to talk about her problems. We were quite silent as she rejected every comment and suggestion we made. She was finding all sorts of excuses not to act upon the situation she was describing. I had learned to enjoy our consciousness raising phases because they were stimulating, we were learning a lot from these sessions. But now I

couldn't bear to see the process degenerate and become low in energy for the second time in a fortnight. Once again, I checked with the group that our contracts were still relevant to us. I asked them whether our group was still a SHG or whether its function had to be reconsidered. They still believed that the primary function of the group was to help us to grow and develop ourselves. Having checked that, I felt free to tell Laura that it was all right to explore her experience but that she needed to experiment with new behaviours. Her chattiness was merely a symptom revealing our inability to deal with low energy in the group and to establish structures to our meetings. I was also suspecting our possible dependence on the group: were we all bottling up our daily problems saving them for the following Tuesday session rather than dealing with them when they came up? My remark to Laura had also to do with the possible danger of seeing self-help therapy as a once a week activity completely unconnected with our everyday life.

Our group had been jokingly christened "the neurotics' meeting" by the other women. At first, I didn't like this term very much. I associated it with the idea that I was fighting i.e. that you had to be slightly crazy to do therapy. Then I got to recognize its positive connotation: it was describing the space we had created for ourselves within which we could act as we wished and talk about whatever worried us no matter how "crazy" or "trivial" it might have sounded, without having to fear the other women's judgement. Our group had fostered a culture which was adapted, at a time when we were still in need to develop intimacy. But the group could become an end in itself and I thought that it was now time to refocus our attention, to improve our functioning in the real world. This would

only happen if we gave some structure and direction to our more "work" orientated sessions. What followed, in the next session marked the beginning of a more structured phase in the group development.

III Doing Therapy

At the next meeting, I invited the women to take five minutes each to talk about what had happened during the week, what good things had happened, what was worrying them and so on. First of all, going round the circle allowed Isabel to talk about herself in a non threatening way. Then it would allow us to decide how we would plan the session sharing experiences or giving some time to the woman who had an urging need to work on something specific. Establishing structures showed that I'd gone one step further in ordering my own emotional chaos related to accepting my position in the group. It also marked the beginning of a new stage in the life of the group. We clearly moved from building up intimacy to becoming a group. Isabel was now attending more regularly and started to express her needs which were not so much about working on herself but about being involved in some group activity. We didn't have the sense of "being a group within a group" as Clare put it, to comment on the sessions we had without Isabel.

The feeling that we had become a group is difficult to articulate. The word that comes to my mind is cohesion which evokes the notion of a commonly felt group spirit. This sense of cohesion appeared strongly when, for example, we decided not to accept another member to our group. It was also reinforced by the feedback and fantasies

strangers to the group would share with us. Comments ranged from: "They talk about women's things" and: "My boyfriend reckons I'm in a feminist mood every Tuesday night" to: "I didn't know you had so many problems". These remarks amused us, it made us aware that we valued our group which sounded so mysterious, even threatening to outsiders. On the other hand, we considered the issue of betraying significant people in our lives by talking about them or working on our relationship with them in the group. It came up strongly for Clare. But we agreed that we trusted each other to respect the confidentiality of what was disclosed in our meetings.

During our preliminary meeting we had decided that we didn't want men to take part in our group. Now we moved to celebrating being in a female group. We all agreed with Clare when she remarked: "In a female group, you're feeling freer, there is no judgement, you're feeling equal". We didn't explicitly consider ourselves as being in a woman's group, in the feminist sense of the term, but our sessions of experience sharing resembled a typical consciousness raising session. We were aware that we had a lot of common experiences because we were women in our twenties and this reinforced our sense of identity in the group. Finally, after much wandering in the dark, because we had taken some distance vis a vis certain rules and had adopted those that suited us, we became more self-directing, more conscious of what we wanted. Eventually, it helped us to approach therapy with less anxiety in a much softer, personalized way.

Laura working on anger illustrates this. She only needed to be told that "it was O.K. to be angry" to take responsibility for how she wanted to work. She started dialoguing with Steve and let herself

go and released her anger. What she was doing had a different quality to her early explosion when she had opened up so abruptly that she'd ended up scaring herself and getting depressed. This time she was calm, "feeling great" though slightly embarrassed. In fact, without any intellectual knowledge of it, she had discovered for herself one of the basic techniques of co-counselling: catharsis.

As we were reaching the end of the summer term, they agreed with me that the last meeting should be devoted to feedback in order to look at what had happened in the group and what we had gained in terms of personal knowledge (if any). We would also decide whether to meet again after the summer holidays. On that day, we pinned our contracts on the wall then I asked them to think about the leadership issue as I'd been so anxious about it. I was wondering why they had not challenged my position, why we had not been through a typical fight/flight phase in the group. Their answer was clear. They saw me as the leader/facilitator of the group because I would intervene when one of them was getting stuck when working, but they didn't resent my position nor did they think that using my skills and knowledge was inhibiting them. We had functioned on a cooperative basis. Each of us had contributed but also adapted self-help to our own needs. Laura had brought a tremendous energy for working in depth. Clare had asked for pace, Isabel in her own way brought structure.

Clare summarized some positive aspects of being in the group in these terms:

> At the start, I didn't expect much from the group. I felt cynical towards psychology and groups: methods are alienating but being in the group was very real. I felt free, I could decide not to do it (opening up, doing the exercises). I had time to find my own way, I was able to talk about myself because I was hearing others talk about similar problems and issues. I was not lonely.

Laura focussed on more personal achievements:

> I have gained an inner strength i.e. coping with day to day problems, facing things rather than repressing helplessness and fear. I have learnt to feel. Being in a group made me change certain attitudes. There was a group feeling, knowing others made me know myself. I'm glad Caroline left.

Isabel's feedback was:

> I didn't expect much. At one stage, I was scared of letting go. I was self-conscious and it took me a long time to get used to it. More recently I have looked forward to coming to the meetings.

Eventually we decided to meet again after the summer holidays.

Once I'd written about our first year, I showed it to the others. Writing had been painful as they could have rejected my analysis of processes. But it made sense to them. I even got a written response to my chapter from Clare in which she celebrated our difference and brought her own perspective on our group.

IV Clare's feedback.

"The group:

I feel as if there is a lot to say about it. Here are some thoughts after reading your paper.

The leadership issue:

It never struck me at the time as being particularly important that we looked to you for guidance. Far from it being a destructive or uncreative thing, it seemed to be the "adult" thing to do at the time to seek your help when help was needed. I see it more as our choice to ask you rather than you over imposing your views. The fact that your interventions/views were invariably helpful is not the same as saying that you imposed them on the group.

Also, please accept that you can and do give valuable guidance. This is not a crime and we would have been foolish to ignore it.

I suppose I don't see 'Self-Help' as "helping self" unaided by others but as "helping each other".

Also, what does a 'leader' do by definition? I didn't see you as a leader anymore than anyone else in their own way. Perhaps we all lead the group or the direction of it in some way? And your direction was to be the guide along the way but we all made the step?

Something that was important to me was that you allowed us to take the group our way. I got the faintest suspicion from your paper that you started out with an ultimate aim of moving in a more methodical therapeutic direction (and this issue was raised fairly early on in the group) but in the event, it didn't go that way. You allowed us to direct it, deliberately or not towards what we wanted.

(There seems to be an interesting issue here, i.e., can you/one ever

develop a "hard approach" in the group, without having a "leader"? i.e. if you want to say to the group: "You are being too soft with yourselves and are making it too easy" then you are bound to take a leadership role?)

It was really good for me personally that we did take a "soft" approach. I think that if the group had insisted, or if you had insisted on taking a "method" type approach I might have opted out of it altogether.

Personally, it has been a wonderful thing, to be in a group where no one is saying: "You have to/I do it this way". I don't think that has ever happened before to be given such space in a group.

Why has it been so important to me, and so valuable, that the group went the way that it did?

Important - because I simply didn't believe that the only way to help and healing is through 'beating the breast' in the group. I feel as if I've done enough of that to last a lifetime in the last four years or so, in normal everyday life. The "help" for me, that comes from the group is to be able to be calm, relaxed, safe to experience that side of me.

Other groups seem to make that a kind of crime, I'm still trying to find out why.

It always strikes me that the "method" approach is a male one i.e.,

with emphasis on technique, with restricted "tunnel vision" perceptions (the group hasn't changed my ideas at all that "method" type groups are alienating, predictable, unspontaneous, with everyone acting out the proper role).

The fact that we did what we wanted, that the group was completely natural, spontaneous, unforced and unrestricted in our choice, made it very special. Also, it was quite unpredictable, other than the introduction we always used, it went in different directions every time.

It made me far more aware of lots of 'hidden drawers' in my own life than any other group had previously done so, and more importantly, more aware of them in such a way I felt <u>able</u> to do something about them (e.g. in relationships, past and present, at home, at work with parents).

The fact that we did talk about our experiences was a vital part of this - it was important to be allowed to have experiences, to share them, to value them and to accept them as important, and that we were interested in each other. Probably a gift that the group had as a whole was that we were able to talk as friends, to seek the kind of reassurance, support that we seek in day to day conversation and work on things at the same time.

It made the group so much more relevant to the week that surrounded it was/is always part of the week's experiences.

Maybe, a danger of this could be that the group becomes some kind of

"highlight" in the week i.e. a danger of dramatizing our daily lives to give the group even greater importance.

Maybe the value in day to day terms can be assessed by the fact that somebody expressed that she could get through the week knowing that we would be having the group on Tuesdays.

One of the more frightening aspects of this is, what will happen when we don't have the group - is it helping us too much? It really does fill such a gap though it is teaching ways of filling the gap for outside in ordinary life I think. I do feel more confident now to say what I am feeling in relationships, and to accept that I do have high expectations, to accept that I do get cross and angry and can be quite horrible. (A bit like the Gestalt idea)

I don't know about teaching self-sufficiency though I realise there's a long way to go before I'd ever reach that. I'm not sure if the group could help to achieve that completely, but it does help towards it."

V The Second Year and Beyond

I didn't keep a diary during the second year of our meetings, it didn't seem necessary anymore as I had acknowledged the characteristics of our group. I wanted to become a full participant in the group and stopped paying as much attention to our processes as before. I attended to my own needs, I participated more spontaneously to the life of the group; I took more time for

exploring issues which were relevant to my life without necessarily questioning whether I was taking over, leading or imposing my own ways.

In this context of giving up my role as the worried-covener-and-process-watcher, I find it difficult to remember and write about any of our sessions in particular. Although I am prepared to acknowledge that I may be using this 'amnesia' as a defence, in order to protect the feeling of harmony I have when I think of our group, I feel that in our group we had reached our 'cruising speed', that the aims of our group were never threatened. We all attended the weekly meetings more or less regularly. Our meetings were at times, low in energy; on other occasions we would decide to go out somewhere instead of having a more 'formal' meeting (our meetings were now taking place in the evening). We were relaxed in one another's company, we would disagree, show our irritation, even tease one another, but I never felt that the group was in jeopardy probably because differences were acknowledged but never fully explored.

We never put an end to our meetings: although the other women have moved to various parts of the country, we are still meeting from time to time, making space in our lives for isolating ourselves for a few hours in order to share our experience and if there is a need for it, to work on a particular issue. We are still committed to keeping our space alive.

The next chapter will take the reader back in time. In Chapter Four I shall give the account of my search for a theoretical framework

which I thought would help me analyse our group experience. This exploration of the literature on small group processes started almost immediately after we started our meetings.

C H A P T E R F O U R

AN EXPLORATION OF THE LITERATURE ON SMALL GROUP PROCESSES

In this chapter I am concerned with making sense of my group experience at a more theoretical level by comparing it to the analyses of group processes described in the literature.

While intensely living the experience of our group, I surveyed a few of the basic writings in that field. I had different aims for doing so. First, as explained before, I was looking for some guidelines on how to get our group started. Then I searched for some anchors: I wanted to be fully prepared to recognize the phases of development our group would go through. Finally, I was looking for a framework on which I could articulate my analysis. This was a lot to expect from the books I selected, and while telling our story I've made little reference to them, having preferred to describe phases of development in terms of "being" and "doing". I have now to find areas where I can reconcile my unorthodox description of group processes with a well documented body of knowledge. I will first present a summary of the most important theories I have encountered. Though they do not specifically deal with self-help groups, they nevertheless focus on peer learning experiences. I started with exploring the literature dealing with T groups.

I T Groups Methods and Processes

In this type of group the participants are faced with a new social situation, meeting over an uninterrupted block of time with little contact with the outside world. This cultural isolation helps the group members to reflect on group dynamics and interpersonal relationships by concentrating on the life of the group "here and now".

The appointed leader or trainer is supposedly non-directive and neutral; he draws attention to what is happening in the group but without judging its activities. He helps the members to ask appropriate questions in relation to the group development but doesn't give any answers. Since the group has no goal bar experiencing one another, the members are free to choose whatever topic or issue they want to discuss during the sessions. The T-Group experience is powerful, anything the members could conform to has been removed from their environment; they have to suspend the assumptions underlying their everyday experiences. In other words, this situation creates a social vacuum which helps the participants to reassess their on going behaviour and remake their identity. These general points are developed by Bennis and Shepard in their analysis of T-Groups dynamics.

A. A MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT IN A T GROUP.

Bennis and Shepard are concerned with describing patterns of development which are common to all T Groups. They identify six stages of development, divided into two main phases, a group usually goes through in its attempt to improve its internal communication systems. A group of strangers, meeting for the first time has within it many obstacles to valid communication; its task is the overcoming of these obstacles and the development of methods for achieving and testing consensus.

Bennis and Shepard focus on the organic properties of groups to show how through the six phases of development maturity is achieved.

They define group maturity in these terms:

> Group maturity means something analogous to maturity for the person: a mature group knows very well what it is doing. The group can resolve its internal conflicts, mobilize its resources and take intelligent action only if it has means for consensually validating its experience. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961).

The group members, confronted with this unusual situation and a group of strangers, are faced with two major areas of uncertainty. Firstly they have to resolve their attitudes towards dependency and relationship with authority figures and power. Then they have to deal with the interdependence issue and how they relate to each other.

The authors use Schutz's study of these two sets of orientation (Dependence and Interdependence) to portray the attitudes the members bring to the group and show how these relevant aspects of their personality affect the group development.

In terms of dependence, those people who find comfort in rules or procedure, in an agenda, in an expert are labelled 'dependent'. At the other end of the scale are the 'counter-dependent' who are discomforted by authoritative structures.

Some members will deal with the interdependence issue in an overpersonal way and won't feel satisfied until they have achieved a high degree of intimacy with the rest of the group. Others will avoid intimacy, they are called "counter personal".

The participants who systematically cling to one of these modes of behaviour, are regarded as "conflicted": they will react negatively

to whatever is happening in the group.

Other less rigid people are "unconflicted" with respect to the dependence and interdependence issue. They are the unconflicted members whose capacity to benefit from their experience and assess the developments of the group more adequately will help the group to move towards valid communication.

Bennis and Shepard build on these ideas to describe the major themes of each phase, but they also warn the reader that in the process of analysing and categorizing certain facts about processes are lost:

> For example, each group meeting is to some extent a recapitulation of its past and a forecast of its future. This means that behaviour that is "regressive" or "advanced" often appears. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961).

B. PHASE MOVEMENTS:

Phase I Dependence

Subphase I Dependence - flight

Subphase 2 Counterdependence - fight

Subphase 3 Resolution - catharsis

Phase II Interdependence

Subphase 4 Enchantment - flight

Subphase 5 Disenchantment - fight

Subphase 6 Consensual validation

a) Phase I Dependence: the distribution of power

- Subphase I Dependence - flight.

> The characteristic expectations of group members are that the trainer will establish rules of the game and distribute reward. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961).

During the first meetings, the members feel anxious. In order to protect themselves they indulge in small talk, disclose non-threatening details of their lives, show boredom and intellectualize the discussion. However the participants are aware of their "flight" behaviour when they discuss events which are external to the group. In their search for a common goal they use a repertoire of behaviours which in the past has gained their approval from authority figures. They are in fact trying to have the trainer establish the rules of the game. But when he doesn't respond to their dependence plea and doesn't tell them what to do or if he comments on the flight behaviour in the group his observations are ignored or seen as irrelevant to the needs of the group. The members decide that he is playing hard to get.

- Subphase 2 Counterdependence - fight.

> Power is much more overtly the concern of group members in this subphase. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961).

The leader still doesn't meet the needs of the group. Leadership may be discussed in order to tell the trainer indirectly that he is ineffectual. The members become counter-dependent and in their need for dealing with the power issue in the group they may split into two opposed subgroups. One subgroup seeks to establish some "structure", but all effort to elect a chairman, nominate working committees or establish agenda is opposed by the other subgroup. The group shows signs of fragmentation. During this chaotic phase, the members still secretly hope that the trainer will rescue them from the catastrophic situation they are in, that what is happening in the group is part of his master plan. It is too threatening for

the members to think that the trainer is actually incompetent or that they are responsible for what has happened. They still wish for the trainer to rescue them and take his proper role.

- Subphase 3 Resolution - catharsis.

> The independents who have until now been passive or ineffectual become the only hope for survival since they have thus so far avoided polarization and stereotypic behaviours. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961)

Some positive elements have arisen during subphases 1 and 2 but they have been less obvious than the flight, fight forces. In the subgroups, bonds of mutual support have grown. The independents, who are unconflicted in terms of authority play a strong role in leading the group towards more autonomy. The members see the power problem as their responsibility, they evaluate the other members' contributions in terms of relevance to the shared goals not as a struggle for controlling the group or they may ask the leader to behave as just another member of the group. In any case, he isn't attributed magical powers anymore. There is a strong sense of group solidarity and important issues are openly discussed. If the group has resolved the authority and dependence issue during the crucial subphase 3, then it is ready to deal with the problem of interdependence.

b) Phase II Interdependence: the distribution of affection.

- Subphase 4 Enchantment - fight.

> Nothing must be allowed to disturb our harmony in the future, we must avoid the mistakes of the painful past. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961).

The members are recovering from the Phase I fights. There is a feeling of euphoria in the group. It is a time when the members express their spontaneity, playfulness and pleasure. Gradually these feelings wear off, and the development of rigid norms follows. The members may feel bored with the maintenance of harmony at all cost but the alternative is too frightening, they do not want to be involved in more self-study. The reality of interpersonal problems which were explored in the context of the trainer's position in sub phase 3 is denied. At the end of the subphase, the members may split into friendly subgroups again in order to prevent any change. This new breakdown in the group creates anxiety which can't be alleviated by the enchantment with one's sub group.

- Subphase 5 Disenchantment - fight.

> The sub groups share in common the fear that intimacy breeds contempt. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961).

The group subdivision is based upon orientations toward the degree of intimacy required in the group. Two major attitudes are adopted to face the issue of interpersonal relationships. The over personal members want unconditional love and complete intimacy - the counterpersonals reject this, for them it is important to avoid any real commitment to the group. As for the over personals, they want commitment from others to forgive everything. Both groups want to maintain self-esteem, as they all have the idea that if others really knew them, they would be rejected.

- Subphase 6 Consensual validation.

As the end of the group approaches, the members have to resolve the

interdependency issue and establish a method of evaluation.

Either the members put up defences against evaluation and grading and then the counterpersonals will declare that it threatens their privacy and the over personals that it discriminates against the group members or the independents will, once again restore members' confidence in the group. Those whose self esteem is not threatened by intimacy may ask for an evaluation of their role. The fear of rejection diminishes when tested against reality, the task becomes less threatening than what they expected. The members share their private conceptual scheme for understanding human behaviour. If this phase is not too hurried and incomplete the group will have become a "group group". For the authors it means that ideally:

1. Members can accept one another's difference without associating "good" and "bad" with the differences.
2. Conflict exists but is over substantive issues rather than emotional issues.
3. Consensus is reached as a result of rational discussion rather than through a compulsive attempt at unanimity.
4. Members are aware of their own involvement and other aspects of group process without being overwhelmed or alarmed.
5. Through the evaluation process, members take on greater personal meaning to each other. This facilitates communication and creates a deeper understanding of how the other person thinks, feels, behaves; it creates a series of personal expectations, as distinguished from the previous more stereotyped, role expectations.

In their conclusions, Bennis and Shepard suggest that in the case of group therapy, personal issues should only be confronted after the barriers to communication are discovered. In other words, the group should have gone through the experience of Phase I and confronted the dependence and power issues before they can focus on themselves and help each other:

> ... the group in phase one emerged out of a heterogeneous collectivity of individuals, the individual in phase two emerged out of the group. This suggests that group therapy, where attention is focused on individual movement begins at the least enabling time. It is possible that, before group members are able to help each other, the barriers to communication must be partially understood. (Bennis and Shepard, 1961)

This theory was bewildering to me in its overemphasis of conflict and power struggles. Up to then I had explored a type of literature which was mainly dealing with the concept of support and I had been involved with an experience which was low on conflicts. At first the aims of the T Group situation, as a space for learning new behaviours away from constraints, seemed liberating, but the way Bennis and Shepard assess the phases of development uncover some assumptions about the whole experience which are a lot less freeing. They seem to consider that there is a 'proper' way to learn to deal with authority figures and achieve mature interpersonal relationships and that it is through pain and conflict. The neutrality and aloofness of the trainer helps crucial issues to emerge but his lack of support makes the situation very unpleasant for the participants. As for mutual support in subgroups, it is assessed in relation to the group goals and how it serves its purpose; in subphase 2 it is analyzed in terms of reinforcement of the subgroup cohesion or in subphase 4 it is explained as a

manifestation of flight behaviours. In other words, support is never identified as fulfilling emotional needs per se. I understand the need to deal with interpersonal issues within a group but I think this can be achieved through both support and confrontation. I suspect that a method which systematically uncovers power struggles is inappropriate for self-help groups whose members get together because they feel powerless. T Groups methods seem more adapted for people who hold some power in society and need to take some distance from it. I turned to Bion who offers a model of behaviour in psychotherapy groups expecting it to be more relevant to processes in self-help groups.

II Bion's Basic Assumption Groups.

Bion's theory of group behaviour is derived from his experience of taking groups at a military psychiatric hospital and at the Tavistock clinic. He was a psychoanalyst of the Kleinian school.

Bion (1961) sees group activities as a regression to the earliest stages of mental life and gives central importance to the paranoid, schizoid and depressive positions. His role in groups involves giving interpretations of behaviour in order to bring unconscious material into the conscious. This differs from traditional analysis in that he treats the whole group as a patient and addresses his interpretation to the whole group rather than to the individual. He adopts the role of the leader and does not give any rules of procedure or agenda which prompts reactions similar to those experienced by the T Group trainer.

Bion emphasizes the nature of his contribution to the group in these terms:

> I will, however, emphasize one aspect of my interpretations of group behaviour which appears to the group and probably to the reader, to be merely incidental to my personality but which is in fact quite deliberate - the fact that the interpretations would seem concerned with matters of no importance to anyone but myself. (Bion, 1961).

In the first stage, the discussions are futile and the members are incapable of showing any critical judgement, the situation is fraught with emotions as the members are under the influence of their fantasies of a group situation.

> We are constantly affected by what we feel to be the attitude of a group to ourselves, and are consciously or unconsciously swayed by our idea of it. (Bion, 1961).

During the formative phase the group develops a "mentality". Bion expects it to respond to the immediate needs of the group to the detriment of each individual's:

> I shall postulate a group mentality as a pool to which the anonymous contributions are made and through which the impulses and desires implicit in these contributions are qualified . . . I should expect the group mentality to be distinguished by a uniformity that contrasted with the diversity of thought in the mentality of the individuals who have contributed to its formation. (Bion, 1961).

To deal with the conflict between group mentality and personal aims, the group develops a characteristic culture to ensure the group's survival. Bion identifies three different cultures distinguished by the structures achieved by the group, the occupation it pursues and the organization it adopts. These cultures or "basic assumptions" underlie recurring patterns of behaviour: the members will act "as if" they shared the same assumption about the reason for meeting. Only one of these emotional states can be adopted at one time but

the same group may experience the three basic assumptions in the course of its life. Basic assumptions may also be shared by larger organizations, so for each characteristic culture underlying patterns of behaviour in small groups Bion gives an example of an institution functioning on that mode:

These modes are: Dependency (cf Church)
Pairing (cf Aristocracy)
Fight/Flight (cf Army)

A. The Basic Assumptions Groups

a) Dependency

Members behave "as if the group is met in order to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment material and spiritual and protection." (Bion, 1961). The group culture is based on dependency and helplessness which conflicts with the individual's need to be mature. The members express a demand for parental care and expect the leader to behave as a parent who will solve all difficulties and problems. When they realize that he fails to meet their expectations, they choose another leader, who according to Bion is the sickest member of the group: "a thorough psychiatric case" in his own terms. They are disappointed again by their new leader and will try to reinstate the former. These developments are high in energy and very effective in stopping reality intruding on the fantasies. Other patterns of behaviour to avoid reality may push the group to look for an external cause or idea which it will deify. Or the group may split into two sub groups. One sub group states that it is totally loyal to the leader or the cause in order to resist change:

> Members of this sub group manipulate the dependent leader or substitute their claim to support in such a way that adherence to the group will not demand any painful sacrifices and will therefore be popular. (Bion, 1961).

Whereas the other group supports a new idea but becomes so rigid in its demand that few members are recruited. In this way they avoid any possibility for the new idea to develop in the group.

b) Pairing

When a group is functioning on the basic assumption of pairing it behaves as if the members have met in order that two people can pair off and create a new leader. Bion noticed the emergence of this basic assumption when:

> two members would become involved in a discussion . . . on these occasions the group would sit in an attentive silence, a rather surprising behaviour in view of the neurotic's impatience of any activity that does not center on his own problems. Whenever two people begin to have this kind of relationship in the group . . . it seems to be a basic assumption, held both by the group and the pair concerned that the relationship is a sexual one. (Bion, 1961).

The group tolerates this situation because it hopes that a Messiah will be born to deliver them from their anxieties and fears. The members hope that the future will be better. However as in the dependency assumption, they will be disappointed once they have succeeded in creating the ideal person or cause who will inevitably fail to relieve the group from their fears. This defence mechanism will keep the group in a closed system. It allows fantasies of what may happen to obscure what's actually happening protecting the members from any painful decision making which a realization of what

is happening would bring.

c) Fight/Flight

> The group has met to fight something or to run away from it. It is prepared to do either indifferently. (Bion, 1961)

When such a phase occurs in the group, fight/flight is the only self preservation strategy it knows for dealing with problems. The group is highly paranoid and trusts the leader, usually the individual with paranoid traits, to lead them against a common enemy or to create one or to create opportunities for fight. The whole energy of this type of group will be concentrated on releasing hate and anger. While the group focuses on getting immediate satisfaction, it protects itself against the painful realization that the enemy who threatens them may not be outside the group but within it.

B. The Work Group

In opposition to these three cultures Bion analyses the functioning of the work group. It concerns that aspect of the group which functions in a rational conscious orderly way. At this level, members are aware that they have met for a specific task; that they have to learn and develop their personal and interpersonal skills before they can make a full contribution to the group's activity. It is in touch with reality and capable of working on maintaining the balance of forces between what is within the group and what is outside. Bion compares this "sophisticated" group to the Freudian concept of the ego which acts as a mediator between the outside world and the layers of the unconscious. He implies that it is through working rationally and scientifically that the group will

learn to cooperate: "in most human activities today cooperation has to be achieved by sophisticated means". The basic assumption group is only functioning at an instinctive spontaneous level of interaction which according to Bion, requires no effort. The work group and the basic assumption groups are not different groups, they are composed of the same individuals working in different modes which appear alternatively. But in the end, the work group level triumphs over the basic assumptions:

> I think one of the striking things about a group is that despite the influence of the basic assumptions; it is the work group that triumphs in the long run. (Bion, 1961).

Bion's theory gave me a better understanding of the role of the "neutral" leader in small groups, for he writes about his own experiences of leading groups stressing how and when he would intervene. In that sense, he brought a bit of life to the role of the trainer whom I had difficulty in picturing in Bennis and Shepard's theory. The importance he gave to unconscious processes in his model of group development was at first exciting then gradually disappointing. In his analysis of the basic assumptions groups, members fall prey to the dark powers of the unconscious, of the id, which he contrasts with the functioning of the work group. His theory is about the victory of rationality and the ego over the instinctive spontaneous forces of the unconscious. At the time I wasn't aware of Jung's theories on the unconscious, of his analysis of its creative components yet I was already dissatisfied with a conception of the unconscious which devalues the emotional chaotic depths of the unconscious.

In contrast to these two theories which are solely and intensely

focussing on the group and its potential for rationality, the next analyses consider the relationships of the group to its environment and present a more creative view of the realm of emotions and unconscious processes. First I turned to a study carried out in organizations.

III Srivastva's Organizational Analysis through Group Processes

Srivastva (1978) aims to bridge the gap between the knowledge of small group processes and the relationship of the group member to his wider environment, in this case the organization. His model is based on Schutz's three elements of socialization which are seen in all social interactions. Inclusion, influence and intimacy have been observed by Schutz in such varied settings as in studies of family relationships, personality types, group behaviour and literary history.

Srivastva lays out a general picture of the life cycle of groups emphasizing five stages of conflicts and their resolution within the group which occur as a consequence of the three modes of social interaction. He often refers to Bennis and Shepard's model but brings new development to it, in the sense that he sees the individual not only as constrained by the group itself but also by the outside world. He also presents the main issues of each phase in terms of polarity which adds a dynamic dimension to the conflicts each individual faces as he struggles between the dimensions of a dilemma and attempts to resolve it.

The five stages of group development, their corresponding group structure and salient behavioural patterns are summarised in the following table:

TABLE 4.1: Srivastva's five stages of group development

Stage	Structure of Group	Basic Issue	Salient behavioural Patterns
1.	Each man for himself	Inclusion	Safety and Anxiety
2.	Dyadic relationships	Inclusion Influence	Similarity v Dissimilarity
3.	Coalition and clique formation	Influence	Support v Panic
4.	Spread effect: enlarge membership to enlive group	Influence Intimacy	Concern v Isolation
5.	Goal-directed group formation	Intimacy	Interdependence v Withdrawal

a) Stage I:Safety vs. Anxiety.

Inclusion.

The question members secretly ask themselves at this stage is: "Who must I be to gain membership in this group?"

During the first meetings, people are highly dependent on the leader who is the one clearly differentiated individual who saves them from feeling lost in a group of unknown faces. Since he is seen as a saviour he will also be thought omnipotent. This dependence plea may take different forms like 'playing dumb' i.e. asking the leader questions for which they already know the answer. They eventually

become unsatisfied with the leader's lack of response to their dependence plea. Since he is representative of the organization, the members will express their anger by criticizing the facilities in which they work or the methods that are used avoiding to confront him personally. Relationships in the group are at first quite superficial, the members volunteer information about themselves, use name dropping and anecdotes to attract and compete for the authority's attention. The group is likely to rush into its task. But the concern is not so much with the activity itself as with keeping anxiety at a manageable level. The members are much more interested in achieving some sense of identity within the group. Once some personal safety is found the members are ready to face a deeper exploration of self in the context of the group space.

b) Stage II: Similarity vs. Dissimilarity

Transition from Inclusion to Influence.

Having tentatively explored their own self the members are now preoccupied with the others in the group.

The individual asks himself: "If I am who the others say I am, then is the other like or unlike me?" The structure of the group will be formed of dyads as the individuals will tend to form "dyads with those who best confirm the identity that is being established for them in the group". The leader who hasn't shown his omnipotence is punished but isn't yet openly the target of dissatisfaction. The organization can be openly criticized since it is impersonal. During this phase the members are capable of active emphatic listening but they only pay attention to those who are perceived as

similar. This doesn't mean that dissimilar others are rejected, they simply aren't the focus of attention.

This stage appears destructive on the surface: the group members pursue ineffectual activities, they test goals and expectations with similar others and give feedback in the same context. But this apparently unproductive phase is important in terms of the establishment of norms which will allow the participants to prepare themselves for the richer developments to follow.

Srivastva presents the achievements of stage II in these terms:

> Through wide range of aggressive and acting out behaviour, members are learning to differentiate one another, establishing separate identities, discovering one another's limits and boundaries, and developing procedures which are eventually put to more stable and productive uses in the times ahead. (Srivastva, 1978).

c) Stage III: Support vs. Panic

Influence.

Members start to expose dissimilarities and influence during this stage. The question they now ask themselves is: "Given that I am who I appear to be, who must the other be or become to support my identity as a member of this group."

The individual shifts his attention to the dissimilar other and who he must become at least to achieve complementarity to the definition of self.

The purpose of dyads has now been served and they are no longer

needed. The sub groups are now more concerned with influence issues and with gaining recognition and acceptance in the rest of the group for the personal identity which have evolved previously. In their concern for power people may form coalitions with other dyads which share common traits to force the rest of the group to recognize their mutually supported self-identity.

There is also a radical move in the group's relationship with the leader, the members have resolved the dependence problem, the maintenance of their new found identity has become more important. The group tends to replace the old dependent authority structure with one which is more reflective of shared responsibility for an interdependent task. The changed relationship in the group will affect the relationship to the organizational environment. The group may engage in power struggles with other groups to reinforce the identity it has gained.

The interpersonal relationships are likely to be characterized by heavy and active confrontation. Shared responsibility invokes negotiating roles and expectations:

> During this period key concerns are with values of support, trust, affection, authority and influence. The sense of panic revolves around the threat of non existence or lack of these. (Srivastva, 1978).

The panic at the prospect of failure to influence the other to become who he must be pushes the members to define good and bad group behaviour with an appropriate system of rewards and punishment. Though there is a great deal of conflict in this phase, the concern for the identity of the dissimilar other brings about an

active search for ways of facilitating task accomplishment. The members take interdependent responsibility for the work of the group.

d) Stage IV: Concern vs. Isolation

Transition from Influence to Intimacy.

During this phase the members jointly ask themselves:

"Who are we in the context of the group space?"

Having somehow agreed on complementary definitions of identities, the coalitions are no longer important in the socialization of the group. They give way to larger inclusive, interpersonal networks which work towards encompassing the entire group. The member's relationship to the leader is changed, he becomes just another member, his expertise is acknowledged, his contributions to the group may be received with excessive appreciationd. The group has achieved a new level of maturity in its relationship to its environment. There may still be conflicts with other groups in the organization but they are more realistic and happen in the context of attempts at effective task accomplishment. Therefore the group might feel superior to others.

At the behavioural level, the members are trying to leave behind their disputes and "move to a new level of acceptance and recognition of both self and others in a relationship. Much group behaviour focuses on achieving a real integration of the group as a whole."

Members value openness, trust and disclose their emotions: "Signs of real intimacy and caring between members appear." They are also prepared to accept the contributions of the deviant members unconditionally. These changes have a repercussion on the task, shared definitions of group goals are explored. The group works with a great deal of energy and productivity. At the same time the group realizes that the task is complex and wonders whether it will be able to meet its goals. But this pessimism is not unproductive, it helps the members to muster its resources for shared task accomplishment.

e) Stage V: Interdependence vs. Withdrawal
Intimacy.

Having tested experientially the definitions of self and others in the previous phases the members now consider issue in the context of the group. "Who are we to one another in the context of the group space" summarizes their exploration in this final phase. The structure of the group reflects its work towards an ideal state. "The members are both highly differentiated and tightly integrated around the task issues, the raison d'etre of the group and its entire resocialization process". The group strives towards "cooperative interdependence" working closely with the leader inside the group and with other groups in the organization. Members are capable of constructive criticisms of each other and of their task in their attempt to reach the ideal task group level, though they are aware that it is unlikely to be achieved. They are also able to give support to others and express their affection to each other. Members are also able to evaluate their contribution to the group

task performance.

Finally Srivastva warns that the perfectly socialized individual or group do not exist. The process is always incomplete, helping to resolve momentary central conflicts. However when the group is confronted with new development issues, it will realize that earlier resolutions were inadequate and will have to start addressing the earlier issues again making another attempt at getting nearer an ideal completion.

Srivastva's theory gives more examples of what is happening in a group than Bennis and Shepard as his theoretical analysis is illustrated by his experiences of "leading" a group of nurses. Though this analysis of the processes of unsocialization and resocialization seems less extraordinary than the previous theories I reviewed, I was still in need of a theory which would focus on an ordinary group experience.

The next model presented by Randall and Southgate deals with the everyday experience and seek to solve problems encountered at this same level, without expert trainers involved. Their philosophy is closer to the self-help aims.

IV Randall and Southgate's Cooperative and Community Group Dynamics

This theory has grown out of several practical projects Randall and Southgate have been involved with and is also influenced by the works of Wilhem Reich.

Reich developed original psychoanalytical theories relating neurosis to sexual frustration and failure to discharge orgasmic energy through the whole body. For him, all libidinal energy followed a cyclic pattern starting gently then building up to a peak and dying down. His psychological and biological work was never dissociated from sociological critique. While Freud tried to keep psychoanalysis away from politics, Reich showed great interest in the way society functions and oppresses individuals by its establishment of norms and rules which the individual internalizes, rendering him incapable of achieving sexual happiness.

He introduced the term "emotional plague" to describe the facets of organised and inorganised pathology such as group irrationality or destructiveness. Reich believed that aggression had no purpose in itself but was a reaction against the impossibility of satisfying vital needs.

He hoped that his own circle would be capable of applying "work democratic" principles by pursuing in a cooperative venture, common work goals, by expressing productive energies and by being aware of the possible emergence of the emotional plague.

The orgasmic cycle is at first best understood in sexual terms but it can also be applied to the phases of development of a group as in Randall and Southgate's theory. They identify four aspects of group development which occur in creative or destructive ways in different sorts of group.

These aspects are: Nurturing

Energising

Peak

Relaxing

They analyze three types of group according to whether their members have shared, conflicted or frustrated desires towards the goals of the group. In each case, they analyze how the group deals with its phases of development, the leadership issue, the unconscious processes and how work is done in the group.

These groups are: The creative group

The destructive group

The intermediate group

a) The creative group

At best, when a group shares a common desire and the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve it, it gets into a creative orgasmic cycle. During the nurturing phase, people help and let themselves be helped, give information, talk about how they feel.

In the energising phase, people push with plans, ideas, decisions and deeds, challenge and contradict each other. People get excited, energy builds up, new ideas form. Then people let themselves go: it's the peak. Following this, the group moves into a relaxing phase and celebrates its achievements. People show and accept appreciation, they summarize and reflect, they have a relaxed sense of anticipation of what is possible and what else has to be done.

In the creative group, leadership changes according to the phases or

the needs of the group at a particular time. It goes to those who have the skill and knowledge which can best help the process at a given time, whether it has to do with organising, producing or caring aspects of leadership.

Randall and Southgate give a detailed analysis of how these three dimensions of leadership manifest themselves throughout the creative cycle:

> In the nurturing phase, organizing leadership goes to those who can offer information and helpful ways of looking at problems. Production leadership goes to those who know how to prepare for the task. Emotional leadership goes to those who can give emotional support and succour, draw people together and help them feel included.
> In the energising phase, organizing leadership moves to those whom the group trusts to take risks; make quick decisions or pursue new courses of action. Production leadership goes to the expert, practical and energetic workers who have the skills to do the task. Emotional leadership is with the enthusiastic and vigorous who fire with their energy. At the peak, the group experiences an explosion of pleasure. Leadership has no importance.
> In the relaxing phase, organizing leadership move to those who can synthesize, tie up loose ends and draw conclusions. Production leadership moves to those who can complete the work, add the finishing touches and tidy up. Emotional leadership goes to those who can lead celebrations, move away from the task and wind down. (Randall and Southgate, 1980).

When the group is truly creative, unconscious processes take care of themselves. Good ideas arise as if by magic and members are able to tune into each others' feelings without words and explanations.

The task itself is emotionally satisfying for all the members who have shared the same desire for it.

b) The destructive group

The destructive group doesn't follow the cycle and switches randomly to any phase. This group is involved in a massive flight from reality. Its characteristics resemble those of Bion's basic assumption groups.

The group is dominated by its unconscious processes in the form of defences against anxiety and needs to survive at all costs. Official and private desires are frustrated which make the goals of the group difficult to achieve.

Thus during the destructive energising phase, people smother, patronise, refuse help, are dependent, tantalised or feel furious. During destructive energising, pushing becomes bullying, invading, dominating, character assassination; people feel frightened, furious, rejected or rejecting. They may gang up in sub groups, conspire or lie. The peak is replaced by paranoid attacks, panicky flights, punch ups. There is no celebrating during the destructive relaxing phase, instead people drown their sorrows, believe in false ideals for the future and try to get by with illusions. In such a group, the choice of leaders is extremely important: people look for those who will save the group, fulfil their hopes and unconscious fantasies. As in Bion's basic assumption groups, leaders are chosen for their abilities to symbolize the group's needs for security (dependency); its hatred, fury and fear (fight/flight) or its idealized hope for the future (pairing). The leaders are omnipotent and adulated, they also eventually attract strong opposition.

Randall and Southgate show that, depending on the nature of its

defences, the group can also get stuck in one of the four phases of development:

> If a need for security is dominant the group will enter a phase of destructive nurturing. As desire becomes difficult to achieve, people start to imagine that it may be embodied or possessed by those who seem the strongest or most reliable in the group. The world seems uncertain: people desire safety, security, reassurance, comfort, reliability. Leadership is with parental figures: they're controlling, encouraging passivity and dependence. People are rebellious, but unclear exactly what they're rebelling against. If hate, fury and fear are dominant, the group will enter a phase of destructive energising. As desire is threatened people are thrown into a panic state, where they fear annihilation and destruction (...). The world becomes threatening or terrifying so people seek survival by attacking or fleeing. Leadership is with aggressive and sadistic figures who will identify an enemy indiscriminately and take immediate action to fight or flee. Some people oppose by adopting exactly the same tactics as the leaders. Leadership and opposition switch randomly. Others oppose simply by leaving, because the situation has become too much.
> If hope for the future is dominant, the group will enter a phase of destructive relaxing. Achieving desire has become so far in the future that people try to imagine it happening now and turn to those who can provide a ritual that will momentarily make them feel they have achieved their desire. The present world becomes unimportant (...). Leadership is with inspiring but remote figures who tell stories or create myths of the coming glory, conduct an endless dress rehearsal.
> Those who oppose are seen as mistaken or deluded; their perception is denied; they are ignored, or regarded as lost souls to be pitied. (Randall and Southgate, 1980).

In a destructive group organizing and producing are chaotic and the task may even be abandoned.

c) <u>The intermediate group</u>

The everyday group experience is the best example of what is happening in the intermediate group. People try to manage a balance between the creative and destructive forces in the group. Although there are differences between the levels of desire, people get enough satisfaction to continue being members. The cycle feels a

bit flat: nurturing may not happen and business is started immediately or if it does happen, people talk politely but without real interest in each other, or some people may try to do the nurturing for everybody.

In the energising phase, group members spend their time pushing for things to happen or relying on a few activists; they spend too much time on details or become bogged down in abstract principles; people are often bored and may fight private battles. The peak may not happen or if it does, is experienced as a relief as the group is exhausted. While relaxing, people fail to summarize or tie up loose ends and some people are not clear what's been achieved.

The work is unsatisfying and requires much energy, organising and producing tend to be split and emotional satisfaction is often separate from the work.

In the intermediate group, the three aspects of leadership are very distinct: at one level, leadership may be creative whereas it may be destructive or non existent at another. Randall and Southgate give several illustrations of these distinct levels of organizing, production and emotional leadership as, for example, in the "Founder's syndrome". In this case, leadership is with one or two founders. They offer creative organizing and production leadership but tend to be more destructive at the emotional level. They are completely dedicated to the cause and expect similar loyalty from all the other members. This type of leadership is useful at the pioneer phase of an organization as it helps the group to battle against all odds. But if, later on, the leaders do not acknowledge

that their usefulness is past, then a battle will ensue with those who are determined to establish a new culture.

This theory clarified and brought a flavour of "reality" to many aspects of group processes and especially to Bion's theories. Thanks to simple examples taken from everyday life situations, I understood better the differences between a creative and a destructive group depending on the degree of common or conflicting desires shared by the members and on their abilities to deal with the emergence of unconscious processes.

So at this point, I felt I had a fair overall understanding of the main issues discussed in the literature on groups (these are summarized in the following chart) and I felt ready to assess our experience in the light of these theories.

	BENNIS AND SHEPARD	BION	SRIVASTVA	RANDAL AND SOUTHGATE		
THEORETICAL INFLUENCE	FREUD; SCHUTZ; LEWIN	FREUD; KLEIN	SCHUTZ	REICH; BION		
FOCUS	T. GROUP = HERE AND NOW	BASIC CULTURAL ASSUMPTION	SOCIALIZATION	ENERGY		
PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALTERATION	I DEPENDENCE 1 DEPENDENCE - FLIGHT 2 COUNTER DEPENDENCE - FIGHT 3 RESOLUTION - CATHARSIS II INTERDEPENDENCE 4 ENCHANTMENT - FLIGHT 5 DISENCHANTMENT - FIGHT 6 CONSENSUAL - VALIDATION	INSTINCTIVE LEVEL DEPENDENCY / PAIRING / FLIGHT/FIGHT HELPLESS MEMBERS / TWO PEOPLE PAIR OFF TO CREATE A NEW LEADER / FIGHTING OR AVOIDING AN OUTSIDE ENEMY EGO LEVEL WORKING GROUP: FUNCTIONS IN A RATIONAL WAY.	INCLUSION INCLUSION INFLUENCE INFLUENCE INTIMACY INTIMACY	CREATIVE GROUP NURTURING ENERGISING PEAK RELAXATION	INTER-MEDIATE EVERYDAY LIFE GROUP	DESTRUCTIVE DEFENCE AGAINST REALITY
LEADERSHIP	NEUTRAL INTERPRETATION OMNIPOTENT INCOMPETENT FOUGHT ACCEPTED AS JUST ANOTHER MEMBER	INSTINCT LEVEL DEPENDENCY / PAIRING / FLIGHT/FIGHT PARENTAL FIGURE / IDEAL PERSON OR IDEA / PARANOID MEMBER EGO LEVEL CO-OPERATION	AS IN BENNIS AND SHEPARD	SHARED LEADER-SHIP	COPING WITH EMERGENCY	AS IN BIONS BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

TABLE 4.2: Summarizing four theories on group processes

V Reviewing Small Group Theories in the Context of our Experience

So far, I haven't compared each theory to our group since they all end up emphasizing the same processes. Firstly each analysis is presented in terms of stages of development, of well ordained progression towards maturity and in the first three theories presented, it is achieved through confronting authority figures and dealing with control issues.

The leadership issue takes on great importance in all these analyses and, apart from Randall and Southgate's creative group, leaders arouse negative emotions, attract negative projections or are assumed to be omnipotent "gods", parental figures or "sick". In most models the group starts with leadership fixations which have to be overcome in an unsupportive environment.

At first I tried to compare my group with these theories; I was highly dependent on the literature I have surveyed here. I stood in awe of such group literature 'classics' as Bennis and Shepard or Bion. Thus when I started comparing these analyses with the drafts I had written on our group, I became critical of my own sense making and temporarily lost confidence in my description of our experience. Words in print assumed such power that I ended up thinking that I had avoided getting into the major issues described by the 'experts' - I questioned, for example, the validity of the way we cooperated with each other. In our group, this process didn't resemble Bion's views; it had seemed quite 'natural' for us to cooperate, we didn't need to learn how to achieve it. This difference, as with many other discrepancies between theories and my

analysis, made me wonder whether my own work hadn't been an attempt at covering up less pleasant aspects of our group. I tried looking at our processes and development from the perspective of the four theories I had explored. I searched for times when our experience fitted these theories and found that at one level I could find some instances which matched them.

I could explain the first meetings we had, when we rushed into the task which made everybody defensive, in terms of fight/flight. Caroline was fighting the aims and methods of the group. Laura could be said to make a dependence plea when she denied being able to take a more active part in the running of the sessions because she didn't know enough about technique. Wasn't Isabel avoiding (flight) the group since she was so often absent? Wasn't Clare defensive when she urged us to stay at a lighter level. Did we take up her suggestions because we were happy to avoid the task? Was I the group's nurturer, the provider of safe boundaries since the group couldn't meet without me? In fact, it became irrelevant to answer yes or no or maybe to these questions. Whether we were involved in fight or flight phases was not crucial for it didn't reflect the whole of our experience. In trying to force the story of our group into the established concepts, I was losing much of its richness and essential aspects.

I approached the problem of comparing our experience with the literature on groups from a different angle, and decided to tackle another question: "If we didn't follow the phases of development the literature talks about, where and how are its major themes like power, authority and feelings expressed in our group?" This

question provided a much more fruitful dialogue with the literature.

It struck me that Srivastva's categories of group socialisation made more sense in our experience if the phases were reversed i.e. it seemed that instead of inclusion, influence, intimacy we dealt first with issues of intimacy before considering power and the task itself.

After the disastrous "big-bang" approach to the task, we were careful to take time to meet each other again to accept each other's experience unconditionally without feeling threatened by our dissimilarities. In other words, we met at a deeper level than inclusion. We sought to tune ourselves into how others felt, we also disclosed aspects of our lives which didn't resemble the exchange of basic, superficial information belonging to the inclusion level. Once we had created an intimate space based on our capacity to nurture each other emotionally we were ready to deal with the power issue. It didn't end up, as I explained in detail in Chapter 3, in the other women questioning my position in the group. Instead, I think we were trying to find our own power, only then we were able to work on ourselves. Protected by the group and with the help of technical resources, we were now trying to find within ourselves the strength to deal with personal issues. We cooperated with each other from the start and it's what allowed us to give our meetings their final shape without facing too many traumatic events. So we avoided conflicts but not in a "neurotic" way, the process we developed was freeing, as if we didn't see the point of fighting as there were other ways with which we were at ease which eventually allowed us to deal with the aims and goals of our group.

Cooperation wasn't a defence mechanism against anxiety or a way to keep our aggression down but we "naturally" used it since it was where our skills and strength happened to be. The situation can be summarized in very simple terms: we weren't good at fighting but more inclined to cooperate so why not use our skills if it brought the desired result?

This idea applies to our way of dealing with the leadership issue, which was summarized in Clare's written feedback. Issues of dependence and counterdependence weren't salient in the group.

Instead, at least according to Clare, it was mature to take into account whatever guidance was provided instead of being destructive and uncreative. Let me quote her again on this:

> Also what does a "leader" do by definition. I didn't see you as a leader anymore than anyone else in their own way. Perhaps we all led the group or the direction of it in some way? And your direction was to be the guide along the way but we all made the step?

For a long time, I'd had a distorted perception of what I was doing to the group i.e. I was imposing my ideas, I was oppressive, and so on. I had exaggerated the situation. I didn't resemble leaders of the literature on T Groups. I had never considered being interpretative or neutral. The women felt that leadership was shared in our group, that my guidance was a way to respect the principles of self-help i.e. helping self but also helping others. We must have come close to what Randall and Southgate describe as creative leadership since leadership, control and authority were not issues in our group.

At this point I must say that the process wasn't always smooth nor that we were always creative. I certainly fear giving a rosy picture of our group. So to use Randall and Southgate's energy model, I have to say that the cycle felt flat at times, when we couldn't get a meeting off the ground and chatted politely or when one of us was taking over the whole session.

The term cycle is useful in our case; it gives me the possibility of talking about the development of our group in terms of a process which has been at first chaotic then recycled and refined many times as we oscillated between phases of doing work and sharing experiences. Our development wasn't a linear one, not as structured as in Bennis and Shepard's model for example.

Eventually I accepted the differences between our experience and the theories reviewed. I found that our group was allowing me to take some distance from the assumptions underlying the theoretical analyses. I started resenting models relying mainly on aggression, power and omnipotence which would have explained our experience in terms of flight and defences. But then these theories didn't take into account all female groups.

It occurred to me that these theories described men or mixed groups from which they were deriving several assumptions. As I explained before, the achievement of the task is of primary importance, the group is declared mature when it can deal with the task successfully. Relationships in the group are less important, if anything they are a means to an end as they are helping to achieve the group goal. Logical analysis and rationality are the only way

to make "mature" decisions as in Bion's distinctions between the instinctive levels and the work group, the only one to show rationality. Members should conflict before they can reach an agreement. So it's no surprise that these conditions favours the emergence of a powerful leader because, if the leader is going to distance himself sitting "like a Buddha and making the odd penetrating remark" to use a few verses of J. Rowan's poem (1976) on T groups, then people are going to rebel against this rigid almost manipulative behaviour. With the help of Randall and Southgate's analysis of creative leadership I freed myself from the view that leadership was a manipulative role. I also realized that one type of explanation was presented as a norm for all types of experiences.

Then to go back to the notion of men's experiences in groups, I realized that most of these theories found their roots in psychoanalytical theories. Bennis and Shepard and Bion are influenced by freudian views on group behaviour. Freud (1922) mainly used the Church and the Army, two almost exclusively male institutions to develop the concept of libidinal processes in groups. He referred to the earliest forms of relationship between a child and father in order to explain the emotional ties bonding members and leader in terms of identification. The leader can exercise his authority because he represents the group ideal. The members incorporate his ideas and attitudes and make them their own. Randall and Southgate use a masculine model of energy: the Reichian cycle refers to the biological male reactions and indeed Reich thought that there wasn't any difference between the sexual patterns of men and women.

So it appears that Reich and the other authors had first developed their theories from a male point of view and generalized it to any sort of group experience, whoever the participants were, whatever their gender.

What I'd read previously on the membership of self-help groups took a new importance. Levy had observed that:

> ... with the exception of the A.A., the membership of all the other self-help groups was either exclusively or predominantly female: a fact which is also true of other forms of psychotherapy . . . either men are less able to publicly admit their need for help or they do not regard self-help groups as likely to be effective in meeting their needs. (Levy, 1976).

Put in the context of Wollert's (1982) assertion that "confrontation is deemphasized in SHG" it made sense to say that the few connections with other theories could be explained by the fact that literature only reflects our mainstream, male culture and ignores the "reality" of processes which are more specific to women. It became crucially important for me, as a woman, to orientate my research towards researching into female processes. I realized quite late that some knowledge had been hidden from me and consequently resented the literature for leaving me in the dark for so long and for preventing me understanding that there were other modes of being in the world. The concept of self-help had become the tip of an iceberg. It had helped me to understand that softer group structures enable the emergence of alternative processes with which women felt more at ease. But there are other groups which are also developing less oppressive structures for working in groups. There are trends pointing towards changing convictions on what "good" group work and "good" leadership is. These trends will be

considered in the next chapters.

Now that I am prepared to enter a new cycle in the research, it is the concept of female process which becomes central to the research as I have to find out if there is such a thing as a female way of behaving, perceiving and feeling and how it differs from the male's way.

Finally, though I'm now searching for the female process, I want to make clear that I'm not rejecting the traditional analysis, I'm not interested in replacing one "truth" by another. But the latter is well documented while the former needs to find a place next to the orthodox model. I'm aware that I might sound idealistic in my search but it is true that I'm also interested in the possible, with identifying phenomena which could occur, with the underdeveloped or with potentials about to emerge in groups. I want to deal with what Heron (1977) calls "the possibilia mapping of a phenomenon" and describe what is, what might be, what could be.

The next cycle of the research deals with such seemingly diverse but at the same time such intertwined fields of knowledge as the women's movement, social forecasting, Jungian analysis and Taoist philosophy. They provided me with a framework within which I could articulate my speculations on the female process.

C Y C L E I I

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the first research cycle, I decided to re-centre my field of study. The self-help movement had helped me to understand that less visible aspects in our culture point towards different ways of working in groups. My own experience had shown me that women, if given enough space in a single sex group, would go through the development process of the group in a way which did not bear much resemblance with a few famous academic texts. We had unintentionally, challenged the assumptions that in order to become mature we had to be rational, analytical and conflict over the task issue. I then decided to use the terms male and female processes to explain the differences between what I had read (male) and what I had experienced (female).

In the present part of this thesis I will show how I gave more grounding to what were in the first cycle, "raw" insights.

This part of the research has been exciting at times, depressing at others. My first attempts at discussing my rather inarticulate ideas with friends had often been disastrous, in the sense that I got accused of practicing new forms of sexist psychological pro-woman elitism. I was told that there were no differences between men and women as such, all of them having been artificially imposed on us by society, that we had to eradicate them and start behaving as people instead of creating new distinctions. This attitude confused me, I started believing that I had set off on the wrong track.

Gradually I decided to start anew and set off in different directions in order to decide for myself if there were such things as femaleness and maleness beyond biological differences. If gender was an artificial construct enabling society to control people then that was exactly where I had to start.

I resumed my library research, considering first the notion of gender through feminist texts. This led me to explore "new age" literature concerning trends towards a more balanced, harmonious society which involves shifting towards more feminine modes and integrating them to a male biased society. The account of this exploration will be given in the next three chapters. Though it is divided in neat categories belonging to different types of reflection on the female I need to say that my journey was not as organised as that. I have also never limited myself to reading. While making sense of the literature I've interviewed a few people whose experience could illuminate the theories. Thus I met group facilitators (male and female), trainers specialized in the development of self help groups for managers and a jungian analyst.

C H A P T E R F I V E

TRENDS TOWARDS A FEMALE FUTURE

Social forecasting involves the assessment of rapid changes in our industrial societies and given the present trends, the development of perspectives on possible futures.

This field of research is vast and rich, for those who share this concern for the future come from many disciplines. I've wanted this chapter to reflect this variety of viewpoints and backgrounds, choosing the works of a social psychologist, an economist, a social forecaster and a physicist. I've favoured these theories because they anticipate the emergence of a more harmonious society. I'm aware of the pessimistic forecasts (see for example Peccei, 1982) but the arguments they use are self-defeating. Being told about so many possible catastrophies caused for example by overpopulation and the decrease of living resources left me powerless. This type of literature also contains advice as to what to do to avoid these disasters but it gave me little wish to do anything about a situation which I thought, was doomed from the start. The works I shall present do not ignore the present crisis but they manage to portray more energizing views of the future, they gave me the feeling that I could do something at an individual level to help foster the emergence of this new society. Furthermore the literature I've selected takes woman and female values into account, the authors exhort us to take these values seriously if we want to manage this shift successfully.

I shall now review my appreciation of Rattray-Taylor's "Re-Think" Robertson's "The Sane alternative", Capra's "Turning Point", Naisbitt's "Megatrends".

I Re-Think: A Paraprimitive Society (1972).

Rattray-Taylor considers how a new type of society can be brought about from a sociological and historical point of view. Looking at existing or previously existing societies, he finds patterns of social change and then turns to our culture to define what adjustments need to be made. He considers more specifically the femininity of the eighteenth century which, in England, was followed by the puritan society of the nineteenth century. These cyclical changes make him say that we are now moving towards a permissive or Matrist society, but he points out the danger of moving to extreme Matrism as a swing back to a stricter, Patrist phase would occur.

Looking further into the past, he compares different societies and their type of religion to bring further support to his matrist versus patrist patterns.

> "When a society believed primarily or exclusively in a sky father, it tended to be restrictive in sexual matters, assign a low status to women and exhibit authoritarian political structure; where as if it worshipped an earth mother, it was likely to be permissive in sexual matters, assign a high status to women and to have an egalitarian or (as we would now say) a democratic political system." (Rattray-Taylor, 1972).

These three features, religion, politics and the position of women in society, are the criteria which he uses to assess whether society is in a matrist, patrist or an intermediate position. Then he describes the main values held by each type of society.

Patrism values order, hierarchy and discipline. The individual has a fixed place in society and obeys a set of rules which exist to

cover any situation. The Army and the Roman Catholic Church are examples of patrist structures in our society. In a matrist society, people are free from "all external compulsions and are therefore equal. They have no authority over them nor do they recognise any." Matrism values spontaneity.

The contrast between these different orientations is explored in a list of characteristics of each type of society:

Patrism	Matrism
Restrictive, especially sex	Permissive, especially sex
Authoritarian	Democratic
Hierarchic	Egalitarian
Women : low status	Women : high status
Conservative	Adaptable
Looks to past	Looks to present and future
Pessimistic depressive	Optimistic, euphoric
Self-control valued	Spontaneity valued
Homosexuality taboo	Incest taboo
Sexual jealousy	Lack of jealousy
Sky father religion	Earth mother religion

Rattray-Taylor believes that all the matrist criteria fit the contemporary scene as: there is a more permissive attitude to sex and to behaviour in general, women are finding a new sense of identity; there is a widespread rejection amongst the young of hierarchical and class differences. As for the severe sky father religion, it has been watered down to a supportive form; the jealous God of the Old Testament has been replaced by the "gentle Jesus"

form for those who subscribe to Christianity. Though we are not going back to the earth mother fertility religions of the Mediterranean, more people are turning to humanism, to atheism or other forms of ecstatic spiritual experience summarized by Leary's exhortation "Remember your body is the kingdom of heaven" (quoted in Rattray-Taylor, 1972).

As he is concerned with the devising of a better society Rattray-Taylor advises us to acknowledge that today's matrist age is a familiar historical phenomenon, so we can assess better what could happen if we fell into the extreme matrism trap. This would provoke a shift to extreme patrism since "when a society becomes too exclusive a moving back automatically results. Alarmed people, turn to a strong ruler, or a dictator, to restore order and purpose to society". It can be a daunting task for the matrists to identify a movement they are part of, and learn from history, for they have little respect for the past and live for the present; they concentrate on Being. Whereas the patrists have different orientation towards time; they look to the past, to the precedents established by their forefathers and concentrate on Doing.

So he advocates a middle position for:

> Extreme matrism develops creative impulses, but lacks the self-discipline to carry them to fulfillment . . . on the other hand, a society in which all behaviour is prescribed becomes rigid: when circumstances change its customs are inappropriate to the new situation but it cannot adapt. It is liable to perish from ossification, just as the spontaneous society will perish from too casual an attitude to its problems. (Rattray-Taylor, 1972).

He concludes his analysis of these two patterns by saying that

> Fathers and Mothers each have something to contribute to the human psyche and it is in the integration of these contributions that greatness is born. (Rattray-Taylor, 1972).

I found these notions of cyclical patterns interesting in that they are not rigid structures. But the belief in a middle position which will bring a harmonious type of society feels low in energy. As I see it, this position can stifle the positive contributions each pattern can make. Furthermore, I suspect that the moves from patrism to matrism are not as clear cut as Rattray-Taylor would have us believe. I prefer to think that both can co-exist at a given time, one being more visible than the other. He supports his views on the move towards matrism with examples of the youth culture of the late 60's, but this movement dwindled under the shock of economic crisis only a year after his book was published. In the 80's, we are witnessing the increasing influence of fundamentalist churches imposing strict rules on their followers as well as the Boy George phenomenon symbolizing tolerance towards the many expressions of sexuality. This for me, suggests the co-existence of patterns fitting Rattray-Taylor's criteria. So am I optimistic or even idealistic in believing that the female can actually find a place in our culture without being immediately threatened by a swing back to a male type of society?

I think that the quality of the optimism or idealism of the 80's is of a different nature from the feelings of the 60's. The belief that we can improve our society is still there but it is based on the assessment of both positive and negative aspects of our present situation. This is reflected in the more recent literature which

shows how through conscious choice and action we can create a better world. Most authors no longer believe that experts and technology will improve our well being or resolve all our problems. We have reached a crucial point in our history as we have now the potential to annihilate ourselves and the planet we live in; it is therefore urgent to act and hope rests with those who are still capable of challenging the rigidity and the fixed ideas of the cultural mainstream. This is what Capra (1983) puts forward in "The Turning Point".

II Capra's Creative Minorities

Capra, himself a physics expert, believes that if experts can no longer deal with the urgent problems that have arisen in their area of expertise it is because they still subscribe to narrow perceptions of reality. Their fragmented methodology is inadequate for understanding that the ills afflicting our society whether inflation, cancer, the nuclear, or rising crime are in fact facets of the same problem. They should be understood as systemic problems ie. interconnected and interdependent. The rational linear, analytic way of thinking which we have developed through hundreds of years of cultural evolution does not enable us to understand the disintegration of our present system. Capra shows why, with the help of Toynbee's historical studies of cultural patterns, it is necessary to adopt a dynamic view of the notion of crisis and its connection with patterns of change. We should view crisis as a possibility for transformation not as a synonym for breakdown or disintegration.

As Capra puts it:

> To understand our multifaceted cultural crisis we need to adopt an extremely broad view and see our situation in the context of human cultural evolution. We have to shift our perspective from the end of the twentieth century to a time span encompassing thousands of years. From the notion of static social structures to the perception of dynamic patterns of change. Seen from this perspective, crisis appears as an aspect of transformation. The Chinese who have always had a thoroughly dynamic world view and a keen sense of history, seem to have been well aware of this profound connection between crisis and change. The term they use for 'crisis' - wei-ji -is composed of the characters for 'danger' and 'opportunity'. (Capra, 1983).

He agrees with Toynbee that while society is disintegrating all its creativity and its ability to respond to challenges is not lost but invested in new energy. Creative minorities will see the possibility of transformation and help society to carry on its evolutionary process. Our time is one of profound transition marked by the decline of the fossil-fuel age, by the change in cultural values or "paradigm shift" and above all by the decline of 3000 years of patriarchy. In this context, Capra sees the feminist movement as "one of the strongest cultural currents of our time (which) will have a profound effect on all further evolution".

But Capra goes further than merely acknowledging the woman's movement as a manifestation of a new trend. In his opinion we need to re-discover the qualities associated with the female experience which up to now have been distorted by patriarchy and labelled passive, if we want to bring about cultural changes with a minimum of conflict. He refers to the Taoist Chinese philosophy to explain our cultural imbalance; we have favoured the masculine mode: rational knowledge over intuitive wisdom, science over religion, competition over cooperation, exploitation of resources over

conservation. The female mode of thinking, which tends to be synthesizing, holistic and non-linear, could help us counteract our one sided development which has led to profoundly anti-ecological attitudes and to excessive self assertion. This is how Capra summarizes the imbalance:

> Excessive self-assertion manifests itself as power control and domination of others by force . . . our science and technology are based on the seventeenth century belief that an understanding of nature implies domination of nature by 'man'. Combined with the mechanistic model of the universe, which also originated in the seventeenth century, and with excessive emphasis on linear thinking, this attitude has produced a technology that is unhealthy and inhuman - a technology in which the natural organic habitat of complex human beings is replaced by a simplified synthetic, and prefabricated environment. (Capra, 1983).

Once the female elements of human nature are integrated with the self assertive male mode, then we will witness the emergence of harmonious balanced social and ecological relationships. Capra's notion of balance is less static than Rattray-Taylor's middle position. He uses Koestler's concept of the holon system characterized by two complementary but nevertheless opposing tendencies:

The holon has:

> an integrative tendency to function as part of a larger whole and a self assertive tendency to preserve its individual autonomy . . . this balance is not static but consists of a dramatic interplay between the two complementary tendencies which makes the whole system flexible and open to change. (Capra, 1983)

The analysis of the "Turning Point" as well as being informative made me want to read Taoist philosophy. The concepts of Yin (female) and Yang (male) brought a whole new world of resources for

the exploration of the female process. I will show how in a later chapter.

For the time being, I would like to introduce another theory which is akin to Capra's ideas. This time the concept of the crisis of masculine values is developed by an economist.

III Robertson's S.H.E. Future

Robertson is as suspicious of experts as is Capra: in his opinion they tend to be "narrow and specialised". The next two or three decades will be a critical period in the history of our civilisation and if we are seriously concerned with what will happen to us in the near future, we must start choosing for ourselves:

> So called experts - who incidentally are usually men not women - always see the future as reflection of themselves. If for the black writer James Baldwin 'the future is black', for the nuclear energy expert it is a nuclear energy future, and for the space expert it is a future in which space travel and space colonisation are the key features. In general, if we leave the experts to think about the future for us, we thereby choose a certain kind of future - a future dominated by experts. (Robertson, 1983).

The notion of practical thinking about the future and active choice "deciding what we want to happen, planning how to help it to happen and acting accordingly" constitutes Robertson's main message. He presents five distinctly different scenarios of the social future, each one is assumed to be the only realistic view of what will happen by its own supporters. However none of them are unrealistic; again what will happen will depend on our preference and actions. Robertson clearly chooses the Sane Humane Ecological future (SHE) and concentrates on showing what it will be like to live in such a society.

The five chief scenarios are:

1) Business as usual
2) Disaster
3) Authoritarian control (AC)
4) The hyper expansionist (HE) future
5) The sane, humane, ecological (SHE) future.

1) Business as usual

Those who hold this view think that the future will be much like the present. Some reforms will take place to keep things going in reasonably good order. People's attitudes and outlook will not change dramatically. But the main problems affecting the Western industrial world will not be solved either. These views are held by most politicians, trade unions, business leaders and the media who see no point in presenting us or thinking new approaches to tackling deep conflicts. It is in the best interest of people who enjoy power or a privileged position in the present system not to want it to change. Many people would anyway find it difficult to envisage an alternative future.

2) Disaster

In this case, there will not be any future at all. Society will break down catastrophically. This view is shared by people who believe that a nuclear war is inevitable or that it will not be possible to avoid increasing crime, pollution or famine. This pessimistic warning comes from Environmentalists like Paul Ehrlich who said that he "would take even money that England will not exist

in the year 2000 and give 10 to 1 that the life of the average Briton would be of distinctly lower quality than it is today." (in Robertson, 1983). They mean to be constructive and hope that people will react against this moral blindness or the inertia of our political system which are leading us to disaster. But Robertson points at the danger of being overwhelmed by these prophecies which could "paralyse our will to act."

Whereas "Business as usual" brings no change and "Disaster" no hope, the next three scenarios offer possibilities for creating sustainable futures.

3) Authoritarian control

This is a "Brave New World" type of future. Because our democracies will be unable to cope with a population explosion and limited economic growth, they will be replaced by authoritarian governments. These authoritarian regimes will enforce law and order and distribute fairly the limited resources. This type of future would appeal to those who fear "disorder more than they fear the prospect of neo-fascism or neo-stalinism." But highly centralised bureaucratic governments are inefficient and oppressive which make this scenario unacceptable.

4) Hyper expansion (HE)

This optimistic scenario is based on the assumption that expansion can continue indefinitely and that eventually we will all be wealthy (in material goods) and that we will be in control of our

environment. One exponent of this future, David Bell specifies five elements of what he calls the post industrial society:

1. Economic sector: the change from a goods producing to a service economy.
2. Occupational distribution: the pre-eminence of the professional and technical class.
3. Axial principle: the centrality of theoretical knowledge as the source of information and of policy formulation for the society.
4. Future orientation: the control of technology and technology assessment.
5. Decision making: the creation of a new intellectual technology. (Bell in Robertson, 1983).

This type of society would aim at producing more sophisticated technological toys. Every aspect of life will be dependent on the know-how of experts and professionals. They will do all the important work while the rest of society would be expected to enjoy the leisure society created for them. People would become dependent on this highly qualified elite. Theoretical knowledge would become the main source of power.

In Robertson's view, H.E. is a dangerous male fantasy; it is "exploitative, elitist and unsympathetic"; it disregards people's need for self-fulfilment and self-esteem. It is more innovative than the "business as usual" approach but it is still about control and power.

5) Sane, humane, ecological (SHE)

In contrast to these four scenarios, Robertson describes the vision of the future he prefers: the SHE society. It stresses a change of direction from present trends towards a less centralised society based on greater self-help and mutual aid.

He believes that, to help a SHE future to happen, we must get rid of the influence Christendom, the post-Renaissance era and the Industrial Revolution have had on the shaping of our values and attitudes:

> In place of the technical progress and economic expansion that has characterised the industrial age, we shall emphasize human development and quality of life. In place of the European values and analytical type of knowledge that have dominated the world in the post-Renaissance age, a planetary civilisation will emerge in which intuitive understanding plays a larger role. In place of the masculine, unecological values that have underpinned Christendom for the last 2000 years based on the idea of God, the Father, giving Man dominion over the earth, we shall shift to more feminine, more ecological modes of perceiving, doing and being. (Robertson, 1983).

In a SHE society, there will be an equilibrium economy which will reflect the principles of ecology, producing useful goods and processing or reprocessing recyclable materials. It will put people first and will rely on their skills as "an important renewable resource". It will put greater emphasis on self and local sufficiency. It will use new technologies, like information technology, to meet people's needs. As a result the concept of work will change, it will be shared more equally between men and women and will include DIY, voluntary work and local cooperative activities. The division between paid work and leisure will be blurred as the status of informal work will be upgraded. We will be free to work for ourselves rather than for employers in this type of informal economy and we will be independent of professionals and big organisations too.

Robertson feels that if we want to make this type of future we should aim at feminising the world. Elsewhere he suggested that

women's life-styles offer a pattern for living in the future (Beyond 1984, BBC2): he is talking of a future in which men will also take breaks from full-time employment to look after their children or to commit themselves to informal unpaid activities. This advice, which is also given in "The Sane Alternative", is followed by a list of activities each individual can get involved in so as to work at the building up of a SHE society.

At this point, I was able to understand the shortcomings of masculine values in historical and analytical terms. My next move was to look for a more synthetic view of what is happening now in terms of the emergence of SHE characteristics. John Naisbitt's "Megatrends" provided me with such an overview.

IV Naisbitt's Directions Transforming our Lives

Naisbitt never explicitly refers to a male/female terminology but what he says is nevertheless compatible with what I am presently interested in. Through a content analysis of the American press over a 12 year period, he isolates ten trends which start to affect the American society and in his opinion will shape its future. Most of these trends are relevant to Western societies and the self-help movement takes an important place in the book; it was reassuring to find some confirmation of the idea that the self-help movement was one aspect of a bigger phenomenon.

He analyzes successively the following transformations:

- From an industrial society to an information society

- From forced technology to high tech/high touch
- From a national economy to a world economy
- From short term to long term
- From centralization to decentralization
- From institutional help to self-help
- From representative democracy to participatory democracy
- From hierarchies to networking
- From either/or to multiple option
- From North to South (this trend is specifically American, it concerns the growing population of Florida)

Naisbitt describes a mix of HE and SHE futures (to use Robertson's categories). From his observations he believes that industrial countries will accelerate their shift from conventional manufacturing industry to the high technology industries and an information society. Since we are producing new, more sophisticated "toys", he allows himself to think that unemployment will have disappeared in the USA by 1986 (interview in OMNI, November 1984). But this hyper-expansionist optimistic way needs in his opinion, to be counterbalanced by the fulfilment of the spiritual demands of our human nature. He uses the formula "high-tech, high touch" to introduce the fact that if the more dehumanising aspects of the new technologies are not accompanied by a human response, these technologies will be rejected. For example, in the 50's and 60's, the technological invasion was counterbalanced by the growth of the human potential movement. The emphasis the movement put on discovering our potential as human beings is important for Naisbitt: in his opinion we need to develop an inner knowledge to guide our exploration of technology:

> Technology and our human potential are the two great challenges and adventures facing human kind today. The great lesson we must learn from the principle of high tech/high touch is a modern version of the ancient Greek ideal - balance. (Naisbitt, 1982).

I was especially interested in his analysis of the move from hierarchies, from traditional notions of leadership and power in management to networking which is a new style, women are more familiar with.

Networks are:

> People talking to each other sharing ideas, information and resources ... . Networks exist to foster self-help, to exchange information, to change society, to improve productivity and work life, and to share resources. They are structured to transmit information in a way that is quicker, more high touch, and more energy efficient than any other process we know. (Naisbitt, 1982).

In the 60's and 70's, the changes affecting society forced their way to the workplace. More educated and rights conscious workers did not believe anymore in the efficacy of hierarchies and bureaucracies, they started communicating outside hierarchial structures. Naisbitt acknowledges that this egalitarian way of sharing ideas and information was developed in women's groups. It has also been a powerful tool for social action with environmentalists and anti-war movements. These groups have fostered a need for organizing and relating in different ways; their influence is assessed by Naisbitt in these terms:

> The new management style will be inspired by and based on networking. Its values will be rooted in informality and equality, its communication style will be lateral, diagonal, and bottom up, and its structures will be cross-disciplinary. ... Networking is the dominant

> management style of the activist baby boom ... using networks, the baby boomers brought us the women's movement, the anti-war movement and the environmental movement. They don't know how to organise any other way. This is the way they organised and communicated; as young adults they won't blend into the hierarchial structure. (Naisbitt, 1982).

The network system is liberating; it reduces the stress and tension that hierarchies bring about and empowers each individual:

> In the network environment, rewards come by empowering others, not by climbing over them. (Naisbitt, 1982).

In this context, the concept of leadership takes a new meaning; the new leader, for Naisbitt, is "a facilitator not an order giver".

So my next move will be to consider what there is to learn from gender psychology and also to get back to writings on consciousness raising, not to refine the categories established in Chapter 2, but as a way in the field of feminist studies and their reflections on the nature of femaleness.

C H A P T E R S I X

WOMEN CENTERED THEORIES

At this stage of my research I felt energized by the ideas developed by social forecasters but I needed to go beyond their exhortations to rediscover the qualities associated with female experience. I wished to get a deeper understanding of what is meant by those female qualities of predispositions described in the previous chapter as potential sources for social change.

I wished to give more grounding to my experience of being in a group where women appeared to behave differently from what was described in social psychology textbooks. Traditional literature had provided me with a framework for understanding an experience in negative terms such as, for example, avoidance of conflict; this was highly unsatisfactory.

Although I am usually reluctant to use 'labels', the range of writings on feminist theories is so wide that a few 'signposts' are needed to map this particular field.

Some theorists seem to agree that it is useful to distinguish between radical feminism and socialist feminism. For example, for Eisenstein (1984), the former holds that:

> gender oppression is the oldest and more profound form of exploitation which predates and underlies all other forms including those of race and class; [the latter] argues that class, race, and gender oppression interact in a complex way, that class oppression stems from capitalism and that capitalism must be eliminated for women to be liberated. (Eisenstein, 1984).

She also differentiates these positions from liberal and bourgeois feminists, which both argue that women's liberation can be achieved through reforms, without modification of the institutions of

contemporary capitalist democracies. As a final distinction she presents the cultural feminist position which concentrates on developing a separate women's culture. Within each of these perspectives, I have found a deep concern for understanding women's condition, for developing strategies for changing their subordinate position in society.

In this chapter, I have chosen to concentrate on the women centred approach, a body of literature which has emerged recently out of the radical feminist position. This approach celebrates women's difference; it explores the values women have developed as a result of their subordinate position in society which have redeeming qualities for all human beings.

My choice for presenting such approach is not solely based on its relevance for understanding our self-help experience, it is also a personal one. Within this radical position I have found respect for the variety of female experiences; it also gave me a sense of self-worth and strength.

This women centred analysis is considered to belong to a second phase in the renewed discussion of radical feminism which emerged in the late 60's. I shall consider this first phase in the radical feminist debate which opened the way for the exploration of women's culture and experience.

I The Women Centred Analysis: A Historical Perspective

In this first phase, radical feminists like Millett (1977), Firestone (1970) or Mitchell (1971) identified the causes of women's oppression in the socially constructed differences between the sexes. They dispelled the myth that differences between men and women stem from their biological differences and showed that what Western societies considered "natural" for men and women are created by means of socialization. They are focussed on the notion of sex roles, on the psychological traits associated with the social function fulfilled by men and women in order to show that patriarchal society has exaggerated the differences between the sexes and has allocated women all the qualities that men think to be undesirable. A list of psychological traits (overleaf) compiled from several pieces of research (Bern and Spence in Archer and Lloyd, 1982) shows which roles and qualities are usually associated with the ideal or typical man or woman.

These qualities such as passivity, obedience, emotionalism and all affective characteristics were also defining women as homemakers and child bearers relegating them to the private sphere whilst men exercised power and authority in the work place, in politics and cultural life.

Feminist theorists argued for the reduction of sex roles polarization. During this period many women came together to share their feelings of oppression, of limitation of their potential by their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Women who were working started to realize that their job opportunities and pay were

TABLE 6.1: Traits usually associated with the ideal or typical male or woman

Feminine	Masculine
Affectionate	Acts as a leader
Cheerful	Aggressive
Childlike	Ambitious
Compassionate	Analytical
Flatterable	Assertive
Gentle	Athletic
Gullible	Competitive
Loyal	Dominant
Sensitive to other's needs	Leadership abilities
Shy	Independent
Soft spoken	Individualistic
Sympathetic	Self sufficient
Tender	Strong personality
Understanding	Willing to take a stand
Warm	Willing to take risks
Yielding	Adventurous
Neat	Skilled in business
Creative	Feels superior
Emotional	Likes maths and science
Likes children	Loud
Tactful	Mechanical aptitude
Home oriented	Intellectual
Needs approval	Interested in sex
Need for security	Stands up under pressure
Religious	Knows ways of world

inferior to those of men; they demanded equal opportunities. The women's liberation movement grew from this sense of frustration and need for basic changes to be made in society.

In 1970 it was argued that the movement should press for four minimum demands: equal pay for equal work, equal opportunities and education, free contraception and abortion on demand, and free twenty four hour child care facilities. In 1974 and 1978 other demands were added: legal and financial independence for women, an end to discrimination against lesbians: the right to our own self-defined sexulaity; freedom for all women from intimidation by the threat or use of violence or sexual coercion, regardless of marital

status: an end to all rules, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and man's aggression towards women (Women's Research and Resources Centre, The Women's Information, Referral and Enquiry Service and A Woman's Place, revised 1978).

Towards the mid 70's the focus on female difference began to shift. The women who had joined consciousness raising groups to share their feelings of oppression gained an increased self-esteem as they realized that the consciousness raising process had illuminated and validated their experience. Instead of viewing their differences as elements of weakness they started to think about them as a source of strength. Other theorists levelled criticisms at the first phase feminists for developing ideas that were grounded in a patriarchal, sexist framework:

> All members of a sexist culture, women as well as men operate on the conscious or unconscious assumption that whatever is "masculine" is intrinsically better than anything "feminine" (...) The goals of mainstream feminism are status, power and autonomy all associated with men. The most visible goals of feminism have been derived from an image of what men's lives were imagined to be like - along with an explicit rejection of what women's lives were really like. (Bardwick, 1980).

Radical feminism was criticized for devaluing motherhood and more generally the role of women in the home. At the same time, some feminists realized that fighting for status through paid employment was yet again an acknowledgement of the superiority of a male culture preoccupied with work. For example Greer said she'd never envisaged liberating women into becoming Hoover executives (quoted in the Guardian, September 30, 1985).

I share with these women the need to go beyond the analysis of

female inadequacies, conditioning or lack of assertiveness, although I believe that radical feminist ideas of the first phase are not just interesting at an historical level; they still have a role to play in the 80's.

In my case, rediscovering these theories brought back the same sense of outrage and despair I had experienced when as an undergraduate, I was reading feminist classics such as de Beauvoir's Second Sex (1972). I was deeply shocked by what had been done to women throughout the ages and by the mental and/or physical cruelty which was and is still used to keep them in their place. I am presently concerned with what women have become, with exploring a feminist approach which proposes new criteria, for analysing female psychology. However, I think that campaigns inspired by the first phase radical feminist philosophy are still needed to improve women's conditions or to protect the rights that women have gained recently. Feminist activism serves as a safeguard against the idea that, since women have become more visible in society, they have now achieved equality, that we are now entering a "post-feminist" era to quote a term used by the media.

I shall now explore the woman centred approach which moves feminist theory to a new focus, to presenting positive images of women's values and culture.

II Re-vision as Framework for Understanding the Women Centred Approach

For me, the most important notion to come out of the women centred literature; the one which sets the analysis of women's positive strengths in context is that of revision. Revision has been defined in different ways:

For Rich:

> Re-vision - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction - is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. (Rich, 1972).

While Callaway takes up re-vision:

> in the standard sense of connecting or completing the record; then, "re-vision", as looking again a critical act to see through the stereotypes of our society as these are taken for granted in daily life and deeply embedded in academic tradition, and finally, re-vision in its extended sense as the imaginative power of sighting possibilities and thus helping to bring about what is not (or not yet) visible. (Callaway, 1981).

Re-visioning offers a possibility for a fresh field of research for women and by women. So far, most theories in the social sciences have concerned men and have excluded women or considered them as deviants.

More recently women have been "added" to theories which were derived from men's experience. I have got mixed feelings towards the appearance of the he/she formula in many academic works; I find it positive because it acknowledges the presence of women; I find it

negative because it reinforces the idea that women's and men's experience are the same and interchangeable.

Revision implies developing methodology which will do justice to the female experience, which will assess what really counts as "knowledge", which will propose criteria for a feminist, non sexist way of doing research. Stanley and Wise (1983) have considered these issues. They suggest that feminist research should not become yet another branch of the social sciences but should remain open to all aspects of social reality and all participants in it:

> If 'academic feminism' becomes women's studies then this separating off from ideas and debates is of crucial importance to it. Feminism, we argue should remain open to, adopt, adapt, modify and use, interesting ideas from any and every source. If it becomes cut-off from research and thinking in specialist fields and particular disciplines, then academic feminism cuts off its life blood as much as if it cut itself off from feminisn itself. (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

If they are not sure that feminist research should be on women, they are adamant that it should be <u>by</u> women. They see feminist consciousness as:

> rooted in the concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being and being treated, as a woman. No men know what it is like to be a woman as it is presently constructed in our society. (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

Even more appealing is the notion that feminist research should be <u>for</u> women:

> The product of feminist research should be directly used by women in order to formulate policies and provisions necessary for feminist activities. (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

For them what really counts as knowledge is what is grounded in practical lived experience. They share with Spender (1978) the belief that feminists should question all established ideas on how research is conducted and how theories are produced. They are suspicious of all "grand theories" which provide abstract, universal causes for interpreting social phenomena.

These theories belong to the conventional framework of "normal" science which relies on the idea that pure states of objectivity and subjectivity exist as dimensions of human experience. Within the dogma of traditional science, objectivity reason, hard data are seen as desirable in that they are all associated with male characteristics.

For Stanley and Wise, pure objectivity is not only flawed because it is a sexist concept but also because it supposes that the researcher's self can be excluded from the centre of the research process. In this type of research, the emphasis is put on obtaining theories that are derived from testing hypotheses with artificial "experimental" instruments. The authors believe that these theories lose the particularness of social reality. They argue that feminist research should be concerned with the experiences and consciousness of the researcher as an integral part of the research process. They believe that the researcher should be the central focus of research:

> ... we insist that the choice is of either including the researcher's self as the centre of the research or of simply not talking or writing about it. It is impossible to "do" research and at the same time "not to do it" and "not doing it" is the only way that the researcher's self can be excluded from the centre of the research process. (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

Ultimately they see feminist research as a re-evaluation of the personal which for them implies putting experience and feeling at the heart of the research.

Their ideas influenced my choice in literature on women. I looked for theories which grew out of a researcher's acknowledged personal concern for the issue they dealt with and their dissatisfaction with the conventional approach of doing research. I discovered an emerging wave in feminist literature which takes the notion of re-vision seriously. These feminist theorists see re-vision not only as a perspective for understanding women's experience but also give their own revisioning process an important place in their research and theory building. These aspects are developed in depth by Marshall (1984) in her study of women managers. A few feminists of the first wave have recently published partly autobiographical, partly theoretical works (Oakley, 1984) (Steinem, 1984).

Describing their own experience of becoming feminists and how it affected their lives was more evocative to me than any grand theory on women's condition. For example Steinem's account of her experience as a "bunny" waitressing at a Playboy Club was more immediately meangingful than any "neat" presentation of the mechanisms of women's oppression.

The following theories I shall present in detail belong to this emerging wave. They deal with female socialization processes and values in a way which does justice to the specificity of women's experience.

III Towards a New Female Psychology

The first perspective I shall present gives a positive analysis of female socialization presented by Gilligan (1980) in her study of the differences between male and female moral systems.

As a psychology lecturer, she became dissatisfied with teaching the theory of adolescent development based on the idea that maturity involved becoming autonomous and independent. She felt alienated by this model as she had already noticed, while working on her Ph.D. on moral values, the disparity between women's experience and the representation of human development throughout the psychological literature. She realised that in previous studies on moral systems, which included studying people's answers to dilemmas such as "Do you think a man should steal an expensive drug to save his dying wife if he is too poor to pay for it" (Kohlberg, 1981), women's answers were ignored if they didn't fit those obtained from men.

Determined to research into how men and women make crucial decisions about their lives, Gilligan decided to go beyond the usual design of research, based on resolving dilemmas. In order to assess how moral conflicts are construed in people's life she carried out three studies. They were all based on interviews, including the same set of questions about conceptions of self and morality and about experiences of conflict and choice. Each time she followed the language and logic of the interviewee's thoughts.

As a result of her inquiries, Gilligan realized that the male moral system is based on universal principles of justice, on "right" and

"wrong". The female moral system is much more relative depending on the situation and people involved. Women's approach is based on their awareness of the needs and concerns of others. They see themselves as playing a central role in a network of social relationships. Women's moral system is based on what Gilligan calls "an ethic of care". She explains women's needs to connect and to care by the differences in the socialization processes of boys and girls:

> From very early, then, because they are presented by a person of the same gender, girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well. . .relationships and particular issues of dependency, are experienced differently by women and men. For boys and men, separation and individuation are critically tied to gender identity since separation from the mother is essential for the development of masculinity. (Gilligan, 1982).

A woman's sense of herself is tied up with her experience of relationships. This is what came out of the interviews she carried out with highly successful women. Most of them felt vulnerable as they feared having to give up their sense of connection if they wanted to further their career. Gilligan feels that women have a great contribution to make in bringing about more humane attitudes in the public world as well as in the family.

She hopes that our societies will take more distance from win-lose or right-wrong dichotomies and will give more space to the "ethic of care" and to connectedness. The example she chose was of special interest to me. She reflected on the interpersonal dynamics of groups of girls while they play. They are not interested in winning and worry about the feelings of the loser; they are also more likely

to bend the rules of the game in order to preserve their relationships. This reminded me that in our self-help therapy group we broke a few therpay rules in order to feel comfortable with each other.

Most of what Gilligan said illuminated other experiences and uncovered some of my own past prejudices. A few years ago, I set up a workshop as part of a research project on personal values. I asked the participants to reflect, in various ways, on the relationships between their values and their sense of identity. The few women who attended gave extreme importance to relationships, whereas most men described themselves as valuing their independence. At the time, I did not develop fully this aspect of the research. I just thought that these women were showing signs of weakness by relying so much on relationships, that women had difficulty in becoming independent and autonomous. I didn't appreciate then the limitations of a male view of maturity based on playing down the importance of relationships. Most male participants didn't think that their mother had a great influence on the development of their values. When I asked them what they thought were the values held by their mothers, most of the answers had to do with emotions, closeness, relationships; they concerned human skills.

In this respect, Miller's theory helped me to re-examine women's qualities and values. She offers a complement to Gilligan's work in that she presents an analysis of women's strengths but also assesses the values held by the male dominant culture such as power and autonomy. She considers how these male values should be redefined by women in order to incorporate within them some of the features of their own feminine strengths.

Miller analyses the complex mechanisms of domination and subordination in society, whereby an emphasis is put on:

> some aspects of the total range of human potentials more than others, the valued aspects are associated closely with and limited to the dominant group's domain. (Miller, 1978).

In our Western societies, men have been "dominants" and women "subordinates". While the dominants decided to take charge of intellectual and managerial functions, they relegated all that was connected with human skills to women and consequently these were devalued.

Miller argues that women are the carriers of certain unresolved aspects of the human experience. The crucial aspect of emotional skills has remained outside the full awareness of the dominant culture, since women as subordinates were never allowed to express their experience.

She believes that devaluing emotional skills was a grave cultural error. In this sense the skills women learned in subordination are invaluable:

> ... in the course of projecting into women's domain some of its most troublesome and problematic exigencies, male-led society may also have simultaneously and unwittingly, delegated to women not humanity's 'lowest needs' but its 'highest necessities' - that is the intense, emotionally connected cooperation and creativity necessary for human life and growth ... in many ways women have filled in these essentials all along. Precisely so, women have developed the foundations of extremely valuable psychological qualities, which we are only beginning to understand. (Miller, 1978).

Then she concentrates on analysing women's psychological strengths, the same qualities traditionally described as weaknesses which

women, as wives and mothers, have learned and practiced in the family. She describes women's greater recognition of the cooperative nature of human existence, their capacity to cultivate coordination and working together, their ability to experience, express and interpret emotions. She stresses that women are not endowed with saintly qualities; her definition of cooperation shows that women get something out of situations which require this quality:

> I define cooperative as behaviour that aids and enhances the development of other human beings while advancing one's own. (Miller, 1978).

She also sees a difference between this "natural" tendency and the conscious effort the women who are struggling for self-determination are making nowadays to shift the balance further towards cooperativeness. The spaces feminists created to help each other examine their feelings and desires could also be used to deal with the issue of power. She is not referring to the power to control but to the power to feel "effective and free along with feeling intense connections with other people." (Miller, 1978). In Miller's opinion, the challenge for women who aspire to become equal to men, should not be to learn and think and act like them but rather to re-examine the concepts valued by our male culture and broaden them in order to incorporate aspects of their old strengths. In other words, Miller sees women as capable of strengthening the positive aspects of power if they combine womanly qualities like cooperation with self-determination. It is a path for more advanced development in order to divert the dominant group from its narrow and destructive goal.

Miller's conclusions prompts me to go back to my exploration of the consciousness raising litearature which I undertook when I was dealing with the self-help movement. I am going back to such writings with a newly built confidence. The perspective developed in the women centred literature, allows me to show that the processes developed by the members of an all female group on the basis of their traditional qualities, not only have value of their own, but can also offer new models for behaving in groups to the larger social system.

In the next part of this chapter, I shall present a few theories which show an awareness of the positive contribution women's qualities can make to develop less authoritarian structures within a group.

IV Consciousness Raising Groups: Learning From Women's Processes

Consciousness raising groups are safe places for practising both cooperation and self-determination. Some feminists have pointed out that consciousness raising groups constitute a useful space away from mixed group situations which seem to benefit men by allowing them "more variation in their interpersonal style, while for women it brings more restrictions in style." (Aries, 1976)

Spender (1980)supports the idea that men talk more than women and interrupt more and generally set the style for a mixed group meeting. She gives the example of a London workshop on sexism she attended, during which the five men present managed to talk more

than their thirty two female colleagues together. Furthermore, the experiences of the female participants were suppressed in favour of the general conclusions on sexism the men preferred.

In this context consciousness raising groups are a place for learning and for unrestricted possibilities of expression. The principles and dynamics on which they function are in themselves remarkable. They are based on participatory democracy, equality and cooperation. If authors like Freeman (1972-1973) warn against the "tyranny of structurelessness" and believe that leadership and structures should be discussed as part of an egalitarian endeavour to avoid leadership and cliques, others stress that women are capable of shifting leadership without needing to introduce the concept formally (Aries, 1976).

According to Mann (1975), it seems that the female way of organising and behaving in groups is starting to be noticed by the larger social system. He sees its impact on the concept of winning. While winning and losing may still dominate interaction in most mixed sex or male groups, the mode of winning has changed. Obvious attempts at establishing superiority and dominance at the expense of others is no longer rewarded. McGregor Burns' theory on leadership also reflects an awareness of women's different attitudes towards leadership. He acknowledges the need to pay attention to women's skills in order to create a less oppressive type of leadership. McGregor Burns' concept of transformational leadership evokes more cooperation than control: productive leaders respond to and raise follower's consciousness at every level of need; leaders and followers actively engage with each other, strengthening each other

and rising together to higher levels of motivation and conduct:

> As leadership comes properly to be seen as a process of leaders engaging and mobilizing the human needs and aspirations of followers, women will be more readily recognized as leaders and men will change their own leadership styles. (McGregor Burns, 1979).

This model takes into account the socialization processes of women which would have been unthinkable a few decades ago, but it is still a hierarchical model and I disliked the choice of the term "follower" which is passive and to a certain extent gives less weight to what McGregor Burns is conveying. A hierarchical model, no matter what principles it is based on, favours one aspect of power that is power over rather than power from within . That is what Starhawk thinks when she reflects on the notions of power and leadership and offers the notion of power from within which is a transforming power grounded in the ancient religion of the Great Goddess. It is a way for women, and men, to reclaim a power which is not based on rules of authority. The images of the Goddess, the first known form of worship in the paleolithic age, are based on a world view of immanence which saw spirit and power embodied in the natural world. It is a transformative power based on connectedness, sustenance, healing, creating:

> The image of the Goddess strikes at the root of estrangement. True value is not found in some heaven, some abstract otherworld, but in female bodies and their offspring, female and male; in nature; and in the world. Nature is seen as having its own inherent order, of which human beings are a part. Human nature, needs, drives and desires are not dangerous impulses in need of repression and control but are themselves expressions of the order inherent in being. The evidence of our senses and our experience is evidence of the divine - the moving energy that unites all being. (Starhawk, 1982)

The symbol of the Goddess is liberating for women: it restores a

sense of authority and power to the female body and the life process and gives importance to the association between women and nature which has been devalued by Western societies. But it does not exclude men and it certainly is not a justification to oppress them. It is a way to feel part of a world which is a living organism, not a dead machine to control and exploit and from which we feel estranged. Immanence implies a feeling of responsibility towards this living organism:

> Immanent power, power from within, is not something we have but something we can do. We can choose to cooperate or to withdraw cooperation from any system. The power relationships and institutions of immanence must support and further the ability of individuals to shape the choices and decisions that affect them. And those choices must also recognize the interconnectedness of individuals in a community of beings and resources that all have inherent value. (Starhawk, 1982).

Much of her analysis is devoted to envisioning a society based on the principles of immanence which she believes is possible to bring about:

> A society based on the principle of immanence would certainly not be utopian. It would be dynamic, alive with the drama of conflicting needs and choices, with a constant demand for new and creative solutions. Conflict when it is not resolved with violence, spurs growth and keeps life interesting. (Starhawk, 1982).

The first step towards this society is to identify the aspect of ourselves which has internalized the external authority and power over in order to transform our inner landscape. Starhawk calls this structure the self-hater; it perpetuates domination and tells us the story of our estrangement, of our helplessness and powerlessness. The self-hater must be confronted and transformed into images which embody power from within which Starhawk names the Guardian (for a personal account of the confrontation with the self-hater see

Chapter Eight). The next step to change our consciousness is to meet in small groups, to build communities to heal ourselves and confront our relationship to hierarchies through dealing with the structures of the group.

Starhawk suggests ways of working in non authoritarian structures and presents six formal roles which should be shared among all the members. She provides a rich analysis of group structures for she addresses different levels of energy and process. The facilitator/leader's role which receives much attention in the feminist literature on the sharing of power and leadership rotation becomes one role out of many. The six roles, she describes resemble Randall and Southgate's (1980) different types of leadership. However, unlike Randall and Southgate who think that a particular type of leadership should be with those who are best qualified to exert it, Starhawk thinks that these roles can be learned and shared by all.

The facilitator "observes the content of talk in a meeting. She/he keeps the meeting focussed and moving." Whereas the vibeswatcher remains "aware of level of tension and anxiety." The priestess/priest "watches the energy of the group. She/he keeps it moving, starts and stops phases of the ritual as the energy changes." Peace keeps function "not only during meetings but whenever the group is active. They help keep order and deal with crises." The mediator is a "neutral objective person who helps others resolve a conflict." The coordinator "can serve as a group centre, a switch board through which information is passed."

At the end of my exploration, I felt energized by the ideas I encountered within the radical feminist framework which not only uncovered new possibilities for understanding female experiences but also encountered their differences. With the notion of re-vision, I found support for my reflections on the nature of the processes developed in our self-help therapy group. Yet I didn't feel that my understanding of female processes was quite complete. If in our group we had nurtured and cooperated 'naturally' with each other, I had also witnessed, when I worked for a feminist charity run on a cooperative basis by women and for women, the emergence of fight/flight behaviours, conflicts and power struggles which I thought were to be expected in male or mixed groups but unusual in an all female situation. Furthermore, at about the same time as I was surveying the women centered literature, I interviewed a member of a men's group as I was interested in the type of processes which were developed in them. I soon realized listening to that man that what was happening in the men's group resembled what we had gone through in our female self-help therapy group.

These experiences where a group of women had used male processes and a group of men had displayed qualities usually ascribed to women, prompted me to take new directions in my research. I moved to the field of jungian theories and of Taoist philosophy which presented me with the motions of archetypes of femaleness and maleness and of masculine and feminine principles. In the next chapter, I shall show how these notions helped me to make sense of the idea that men have access to female qualities, and women have a masculine side which they can learn to relate to.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

ARCHETYPAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE FEMININE AND MASCULINE IN ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND TAOIST PHILOSOPHY

The work of C.G. Jung has had a double influence on me. At a theoretical level his description of the nature of the psyche and especially of the function of the animus/anima provided new dimensions to the notion of male and female processes. At a personal level, his writings exerted a peculiar fascination on me, which I strongly resisted as I have always been careful not to follow any kind of "guru". Gradually, I surrendered to the power of his ideas. Recently I came across M.L. Von Franz's description of Jung's personality which gave me a better understanding of what I was going through:

> There is a further characteristic which distinguishes both Jung's personality and his work quite fundamentally from all cultural achievements up to the present time. This lies in the fact that the unconscious was intensely constellated in him and also constellates itself in his readers for Jung was the first to discover the spontaneous creativity of the unconscious psyche and to follow it consciously. He allowed the unconscious to have its say directly in what he wrote, especially in his later work. (Everything I have written has a double bottom, he said once) So that the reader does find a logically, understandable argument on the one hand, but on the other finds himself at the same time exposed to the impact of that other voice, the unconscious which may either grip him or frighten him off. (Von Franz, 1975).

For the time being I shall concentrate on the "logically understandable argument" though I am sure that the "other voice" has and will at times, appear in my writing.

I The nature of the psyche:

The conscious and unconscious layers of the psyche are animated by the energy of the libido. Though at first it may appear similar, the model is richer and more elaborate than the Freudian analysis of mental processes. Whereas Freud's concepts are based on a Newtonian, causal model of reality and assert the sexual theory as a

dogma, Jung's psychology is more holistic, his theories are derived from clinical observations but also from the study of mythology, symbolic creations and philosophies of many different cultures and historical periods. Jung is just as concerned with the future of the individual as with repressed unconscious childhood memories.

A) Description

At a conscious level, the ego is the mediator between the environment and the personal unconscious. As the ego is developing, it will predominantly use one of the four ways of mental functioning, termed as thinking - feeling - sensation- intuition, to engage the outer world and will develop a persona, a facade which should allow flexible encounter in everyday life but can also become rigid if the ego functions on a unique mode and leaves no space for the other less developed functions to emerge.

Behind the ego lurks the shadow, a split off part of the ego which contains qualities we do not recognize in ourselves and embodies our own unrealised potential. The shadow qualities are personified in an image of the same sex as the individual and are projected on to someone who is also of the same sex. At best the shadow needs to be confronted, become conscious and be reconciled with the ego.

When dealing with the realm of the unconscious it is necessary to distinguish between the collective unconscious and the personal unconscious. The latter consists:

> firstly of all those contents that became unconscious either because they lost their intensity and were forgotten or because consciousness was withdrawn from them (repression) and secondly of contents, some of them sense impressions which never had sufficient intensity to reach consciousness but have somehow entered the psyche. (Jung, 1959).

As for the collective unconscious, it is common to all individuals and represent "an ancestral heritage of possibilities and representation." The archetypes are part of this inherited structure. The bridge between the personal and collective unconscious is provided by the "soul image", a contrasexual shadow personality, or "animus" in women and "anima" in men, which exists in us due to inheriting male and female genes from both parents. As the child develops, his/her personality will show the characteristics of his/her own sex while the contrasexual factors recede to the unconscious.

I will not describe the psyche any further for it is essentially a dynamic model but I felt it necessary to provide the background to the animus and anima for they cannot be separated from the other structures of the mind. I will now talk at greater length of these contrasexual personalities, of their inter-relationships with the conscious and unconscious and of the implications of the masculine/feminine theory on the individual's psychological development and relationships with the outer world.

B) The indivuation process

For Jung the supreme goal towards which individual development is tending, is integration and wholeness. We develop through a process of individuation, of internal differentiation of the parts of the psyche which is essential to their integration. In the fullness of maturation, in the second half of life, the Self may rise, the element integrating the totality of the psyche.

In other words Jung saw the unconscious as a process whereby the psyche is transformed and developed by its relationship to the ego; the masculine/feminine interaction within each person is not only normal, but the dynamic factor in the wholeness of the psyche. Therefore individuals undertaking any inner development have to become conscious of the content of the shadow, of the qualities which are embodied in an image of the same sex as themselves, but should also establish a relationship with their animus or anima:

> Just as, for the purpose of individuation or self realization, it is essential for a man to distinguish between what he is and how he appears to himself and to others it is also necessary for the same purpose that he should become conscious of his invisible system of relations to the unconscious and especially of the anima so as to be able to distinguish himself from her. (Jung, 1953).

In the next part of this chapter I will explain in greater details the nature of the anima/animus.

C) The anima: the female inner figure.

"No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him" says Jung (1953) as an introduction to the problem of the anima. He defines it as an innate psychic structure which enables a man to have an inner experience of women. He also identifies the sources from which the anima comes:

> As we know there is no human experience, nor would experience be possible at all, without the intervention of a subjective aptitude. What is this subjective aptitude? Ultimately it consists in an innate psychic structure which allows man to have experiences of this kind. Thus the whole nature presupposes woman, both physically and spiritually . . .the form of the world into which he is born is already inborn in him as a visual image. Likewise parents, wife, children, birth and death are inborn in him as virtual images, as psychic aptitudes. These a priori categories have by nature a collective character, they are images of parents, wife and children in general and are not individual predestinations. We must therefore think of these images as lacking in solid content hence as unconscious. They only acquire solidity, influence and eventual consciousness in the encounter with empirical facts, which touch the unconscious aptitude and quicken it to life. They are in a sense the deposits of all our ancestral experiences, but they are not the experience themselves. . . an inherited collective image exists in a man's unconscious, with help of which he apprehends the nature of women. (Jung, 1953).

This model makes sense to me in so far as it does not favour the inborn over the influence of the environment, it does not imply any idea of predestination but rather manages to describe the balance between the two. The anima is both the product of the inherited knowledge of women and of experiences a man has had of feminine beings, especially with his mother, which will then influence the behaviour he will adopt with women later on in his life. The dynamics between inner and outer worlds' impact on the content of the anima is enriched by the idea that the anima has both a negative

and a positive aspect. At a personal level, while the anima remains unconscious its characteristics will be projected onto a woman in the external world which is not necessarily negative, but while the young man is busy with developing his persona, he is totally unaware of his feminine qualities. As soon as he feels attracted by a woman or falls in love with her, he is transformed by the emotions he experiences. His dormant anima has been awakened and he may grow and mature drastically. But this experience often occurs regardless of whether the woman is really like he believes her to be, he has been attracted by his own "inferior" feminine qualities, by his "own worst weaknesses" as in its primary unconscious negative form the anima is "seductive" and controls a man by her moods and affects, and has a predilection for everything that "is unconscious, dark, equivocal and purposeful in woman, and also for her vanity, frigidity, helplessness and so forth." (Jung, 1954)

It is therefore essential that a man learns not to be possessed by the anima not to be overpowered by her moods and seduction. Only when he is able to differentiate between the outer and inner woman will he be able to accept his feminine side and to establish a positive relationship with her. The anima will give him strength and will guide him through more profound unconscious layers.

D) The animus: the male inner figure

Just like the anima in the case of a man, the animus or male shadow figure in a woman's unconscious has both positive and negative aspects. It is the deposit of a woman's ancestral experiences of men and is firstly shaped by a woman's father. But the content of

the woman's unconscious is different from the man's. When the animus is not differentiated its negative qualities predominate. The animus produces destructive reflections which invade a woman and create self-doubts, passivity and a paralysis of feelings. Alternatively the animus produces opinions which have the character of solid truths.

About these opinions Jung says that:

> Animus opinions, very often have the character of solid convictions that are not highly shaken, or of principles whose validity is seemingly unassailable. If we analyze these opinions, we immediately come upon unconscious assumptions whose existence must first be inferred; that is to say, the opinions are apparently conceived as though such assumptions existed. But in reality the opinions are not thought out at all. They exist ready made, and they are held so positively and with so much conviction that the woman never has the shadow of a doubt about them . . .The animus is rather like an assembly of fathers or dignitaries of some kind who lay down incontestable "rational" ex cathedra judgements. . .Sometimes these opinions take the form of so-called sound common sense, sometimes they appear as principles which are like a travesty of education. "People have always done it like this" or "Everybody says it like that." (Jung, 1953).

The animus is likely to be projected onto men who know everything, on pseudo-intellectuals and word-addicts. It can also produce opinions about any man. These projections have just the same damaging effect on a couple's relationship as when a man is possessed by his anima. Coming to terms with the animus involves learning to criticize and to hold opinions at a distance. Only then, the animus will turn into an inner companion who will endow the woman with initiative, courage and spiritual wisdom.

II The Archetypal Expressions of Animus and Anima

A) Mythological perspectives

Animus and Anima are also to be understood in archetypal terms which, as I briefly explained before, reflect universal human thoughts common to all culture through mythological motifs and primordial images. Jung presented the archetypes in many different ways for they cannot be precisely defined since they are "unknowable in themselves." Hillman attempts to summarize the many facets of these archetypes in this way:

> (1) They are full of internal oppositions, positive and negative poles; (2) they are unknowable and known through images; (3) they are instinct and spirit; (4) they are congenital, yet not inherited; (5) they are purely formal structures and contents; (6) they are psychic and extrapsychic (psychoid). These doublings, and many others like them in the description of archetypes, need not be resolved philosophically or empirically, or even semantically. They belong to the internal self contradiction and duplicity of mythic metaphors, so that every statement regarding the archetypes is to be taken metaphorically, prefixed with an "as-if". (Hillman, 1975).

In this sense Animus or Logos principle becomes the archetype of maleness, the primal masculinity which rules the life of men whose task it is to achieve the creation of meaning, the creative ordering of intelligence. The archetype of femaleness or Eros principle dominates the life of women whose task is to achieve relatedness. Mythical stories illustrate best the male and female ways because they allow for the multiple perspectives of the animus and the anima to find their expression. In Hillman's terms:

> Mythic metaphors are the correct way of speaking about the archetypes because, like Gods, they do not stand still like Gods they cannot be defined except through and by their complications in each other. (Hillman, 1975).

Archetypes should not be conceived as rigid units, they do not exist as such but rather are expressed in terms of patterns and relationships which are part of the complexity of our lives. This is exactly what the mythical story is doing:

> Myths offer the multiplicity of meanings inherent in our lives, while theology and science attempt singleness of meaning. (Hillman, 1975).

Furthermore, myth are not a blueprint for solving personal problems; this attitude is a moralistic fallacy there is no "lesson" to be learnt from the actions of the hero:

> Myths do not tell us how. They simply give the invisible background which starts us imagining, questioning, going deeper. (Hillman, 1975).

Kerenyi adopts a similar attitude towards mythology in stressing its uniqueness as a mode of expression and brings clarifications as to how a myth should be explained:

> Mythology is not simply a mode of expression in whose stead another simpler and more readily understandable form might have been chosen, only not just then when it happened to be the only possible and appropriate one. Like music, mythology too can be more appropriate to the times or less. There are times when the greatest "thoughts" could only have been expressed in music. But in that case the "greatest" is precisely what can be expressed in music and in no other way. So with mythology. Just as music has a meaning that is satisfying in the sense that every meaningful whole is satisfying, so every true mythologem has its satisfying meaning. This meaning is so hard to translate into the language of science because it can be fully expressed only in mythological terms. From this combined pictorial, significant, and musical aspect of mythology there follows the right attitude towards it: to let the mythologems speak for themselves and simply to listen. Any explanation has to be along the same lines as the explanation of a musical or poetic work of art: that a special "ear" is needed for it, just as for music or poetry, is obvious. Here as well "ear" means resonance, a sympathetic pouring out of oneself. (Kerenyi, 1951).

In the next parts, I shall present one myth which illustrates the archetype of maleness and another which expresses the anima principle.

B) The male task

The medieval myth of the Quest for the Holy Grail illustrates aspects of the tasks men have to go through in order to achieve individuation. A simple version is presented by Johnson (1977) in his synopsis of the legend by Chretien de Troyes. I will quote the full story:

> The Holy Grail, the chalice of the Last supper, is kept within a castle, the King of the castle has been severely wounded and suffers continuously because his wound will not heal. The entire country and its people are in desolation.
>
> The king has been wounded early in his adolescence. While wandering in a forest, he had reached a camp that was empty except for a spit on which a salmon was roasting. He was hungry so he took a bit of the salmon. He burned his fingers horribly. To assuage the pain, he put his fingers into his mouth and tasted a bit of the salmon. He is called the Fisher King because he was wounded by a fish. He was also wounded in the thighs, so he is no longer productive and his whole land is no longer productive. The Fisher King lies on a litter and must be carried everywhere but he is sometimes able to fish and only then is he happy.
>
> The Fisher King presides over the Castle where the Grail is kept, but he cannot touch the Grail or be healed by it. The court fool has prophesised that the Fisher King would be healed when a wholly innocent fool arrives in the court. In an isolated country a boy lives with his widowed mother Heart Sorrow. At first the boy does not seem to have a name much later he learns that his name is Parsifal. His father has been killed while rescuing a fair maiden and his two brothers had been killed as knights. His mother had taken him to this faraway country and raised him in primitive circumstances . . .He is a simple, naive youth.
>
> Early in his adolescence, he sees five knights riding by on horsebacks. He is dazzled by the knights . . .He dashes home to tell his mother that he has seen five gods and wants to leave home to go with them.

His mother weeps ... But she gives him her blessing and three instructions. He must respect all fair maidens; he is to go daily to church where he will receive all the food he needs; and he is not to ask any questions.

Parsifal goes off to find the knights. He never finds the same five knights, but he has all kinds of adventures. One day he comes to a tent. He had only known a simple hut, so he thinks this is the church his mother had told him about. He sees a fair damsel wearing a ring on her hand, so he obeys his mother's instructions by embracing the damsel, taking her ring and putting it on his own hand. He sees a table set for a banquet and, thinking it is the food his mother had told him he would find in church, he eats it, not realizing it is prepared for the damsel's beloved knight. The damsel begs Parsifal to leave, because if her knight finds him there he will kill him.

Parsifal goes on his way and soon finds a devastated convent and monastery. He cannot restore them, but he vows to return and raise the spell when he is stronger.

Then he meets a Red Knight who has come from King Arthur's Court. Parsifal is dazzled by the Knight and tells him that he too wants to be a knight. The Red Knight tells him to go to Arthur's court, which he does. In this court is a damsel who has not smiled or laughed for 6 years. Legend says that when the best knight in the world comes along she will smile and laugh again. When she sees Parsifal, she bursts into laughter. The court is impressed. Arthur knights Parsifal, gives him a page, and tells him that he may have the horse and the armour of the Red Knight if he can get it. Parsifal finds the Red Knight, kills him, and takes his armour. . .He finds his way to the castle of Gournamond who trains him to be a knight. Gournamond gives him two instructions: He must never seduce or be seduced by a woman, and when he reaches the Grail castle he must ask "Whom does the Grail serve?"

Parsifal goes off and tries to find his mother and help her, but he finds that she died of a broken heart. Then he meets Blanche Fleur. From this time on, everything he does is in her service. She asks him to conquer the army besieging her castle, which he does and then he spends the night with her.

After travelling all of the next day, he meets two men in a boat. One of them, who is fishing, invites Parsifal to stay at his house for the night. When Parsifal reaches this house, he finds himself in a great castle where he is royally welcomed. He learns that the fisherman is the Fisher King. He sees a ceremony in which a youth carries the Grail. At a banquet the Grail is passed about and everyone drinks from it. The Fisher King's niece brings a sword, and the King straps it to Parsifal's waist. But Parsifal fails to ask the question Gournamond had told him to ask. The next morning Parsifal finds that all the

people of the castle have vanished. Then the castle itself disappears. He goes on and finds a sorrowful maiden. He learns that her knight had been killed by the jealous knight of the maiden of the tent, so the death was really his fault. When she learns that he has been in the Grail castle, she berates him for all his sins and tells him that the land and its people will continue to be desolate because he failed to ask the right question.

Later he again finds the maiden of the tent. She reiterates all his misdeeds and tells him that the sword he had been given will break the first time it is used in battle, that it can only be mended by the smith who made it, and that after that it will never break again.

In the course of his journeys Parsifal has subdued many knights and sent them back to King Arthur's Court. When he had been there before, they had not realized who he was.

Arthur sets forth to search for Parsifal so the court can honour him. Parsifal happens to be camping nearby. A falcon attacks three geese and wounds one of them. Its blood on the snow reminds Parsifal of Blanche Fleu, and he falls into a trance. Two of Arthur's men see him and try to persuade him to return to the court, but he unhorses them. A third knight, Gawain, gently persuades him to go to the court with him. Parsifal is received in triumph at the court.

But the rejoicing ends when a hideous damsel on a decrepit mule enters and recites all of Parsifal's sins. Then she points a finger at him and says "It is all your fault". She assigns tasks to all the knights. She tells Parsifal to search for the Grail castle again and this time ask the right question. Parsifal goes on through many episodes. Some versions say that he travels for five years, others say twenty years. He grows bitter and disillusioned. He does many heroic deeds, but he forgets the church, Blanche Fleur, and the Grail castle.

Then one day he meets some pilgrims who ask him why he is armed on Good Friday. He suddenly remembers what he had forgotten. Remorsefully he goes with the pilgrims to a hermit for confession. The hermit absolves him and tells him to go immediately to the Grail castle.

The poem by Chretien de Troyes stops here. Many authors tried to finish it. One version says that Parsifal goes to the Grail castle and this time he asks the right question: "Whom does the Grail serve?" The answer is given "The Grail serves the Grail King". He is not the Fisher King, but the Grail King, who has lived in the central room of the castle from time immemorial. The Fisher King is healed immediately, and the land and all its people can live in peace and joy. (Johnson, 1977)

After what has been said on myths, it does not make sense to analyze this legend. A part of me is tempted to let the reader find her/his own meaning in the myth. Another part wants to point out the way Parsifal gains his strength and power through fighting the Red Knight, how he learns to control his aggression, how he starts to cope with the inner woman (Blanche Fleur), overcomes her negative aspects (Hideous Damsel) and learns not to be seduced by her moods, how he relates with the more introvert side of his masculinity and how eventually he reaches individuation through the unification of his aggressive qualities and his soul.

The XIIth century legend finds modern echoes in Levinson's (1979) study of men's life cycle. The author became interested in doing a developmental study of this kind after studying Jung's analysis of the second half of life, or period of individuation, when a person becomes more unique. He interviewed men from age 35 to 45; their biographies reveal how each of them reached individuation from the time, as young adults, they developed a Dream. This term describes the kind of life they wanted to lead in the future, as adults. It is the time when they gave their personal definition of the Dream, Levinson concludes from his research that it cannot be fully developed before middle-adulthood:

> ... a man in early adulthood must give some priority to the masculine. His adult identity is colored by images of manliness, and he cannot fully utilize the qualities he regards as feminine. Greater integration is possible in middle adulthood: he now has greater internal freedom to enjoy the feminine in himself and others; and, in a "good enough" society, he is given greater external freedom as well. (Levinson, 1979).

This fits well with Johnson's analysis of the Grail legend, he

stresses that the feminine cannot be tackled immediately in the life of a man:

> If a man undertakes any inner development, it is essential that he discovers anima, put her in a bottle, so as to speak and put the cork in. He will need to take her out again but first he has to learn not to be controlled by her moods and affects or led by her seductions. . .the later and far more important step is to learn to relate to her, to have her as an inner feminine companion who will walk with the man and warm his life for him. Ultimately the man has only two alternatives: either he rejects this feminine side and it turns against him in the form of bad moods and undermining seductions, or he accepts it and relates to the feminine side of himself and of life and it gives him warmth and strength. (Johnson, 1977).

At first Parsifal is not capable of resisting the seductions of the inner woman, symbolized by the first maiden of the story and also by Blanche Fleur. He has to go his own way before he can confront the hideous aspects of his anima (the Hideous Damsel). Our century equivalent of this experience has been termed the Mid-Life Crisis, a time for men to reappraise their own lives and for adopting the Hermit's way which represents the introverted part of the masculine consciousness in order to deal with the crisis.

I also have the feeling that more recently this myth has been forced upon many women, "the docile, often intellectual, daughters of patriarchy" (Perera, 1981). The theme of Superwoman is in the air: a woman has to manage a career presented to her on male terms. She has to follow the same quest and develop a male ego. The myth has become a standard for perfection, an expression of the superego, instead of a quest for personal development. I think it is necessary for women to achieve equality and at the same time to become fluent in a repertoire of behaviour which is unfamiliar to them; this is fine as long as men are equally prepared to learn the

unfamiliar female behaviours and in so far as it does not distract women from learning to relate to the Feminine.

I shall now concentrate on this latter aspect and present a myth illustrating the female way of achieving wholeness.

C) The female way

For many Jungians the feminine, or Eros principle, rules the life of women whose task is to achieve relatedness.

Relatedness is portrayed in the Greek myth of Eros and Psyche. Johnson (1977) tells the story in these terms:

> There is a king and a queen and they have three daughters. The two eldest daughters are ordinary princesses, they are not very remarkable. The third daughter who is named Psyche, is an extraordinary person. She is beautiful, charming, so like a goddess in her bearing, her speech, and her whole personality that a cult of worship has sprung around her. People have begun to say "Here is the new Aphrodite. Here is a new goddess" (...) Psyche's nature is so magnificent so unworldly, so virginal and pure that she is worshipped, but she is not courted. Psyche is the distress of her parents because her two older sisters are married happily to neighbouring kings, no one asks for Psyche's hand (...) the king goes to an oracle, who happens to be dominated by Aphrodite and she, inate and jealous of Psyche, has the oracle deliver a terrible judgement that Psyche is to be married to Death, the ugliest the most horrible, the most aweful creature possible. Psyche is to be taken to the top of a mountain, chained to a rock, and left to be ravished by (...) Death. [Her parents] don't question this decision. They make a wedding procession, which is a funeral cortege, take Psyche as instructed, and chain her to the rock at the top of the mountain. There are flood of tears wedding finery and funeral darkness are mixed together. Then the parents extinguish the torches and leave Psyche alone in the dark (...) In order to destroy Psyche, as she wishes to do, Aphrodite has to have help, and she engages the assistance of her son Eros, the god of love (...) Aphrodite instructs him to enflame Psyche with love for the loathsome creature who will come to claim her (...) Eros goes to his mother's bidding, but just as he glimpses Psyche, he accidentally pricks his finger on one of his own arrows and falls in

love with her. He decides on the spot to take Psyche as his own bride and asks the West wind, to lift her very gently down from the top of the mountain into the Valley of Paradise. The West Wind does this, and Psyche, who was expecting the worst, finds herself in a heaven on earth instead (...) She has everything one could wish. Her god-husband is with her every night. He puts only one restriction on her. He extracts from her the promise that she will not look at him and will not inquire into any of his ways (...) Psyche agrees to this (...) Her two sisters, who had been mourning her loss hear that Psyche is living in a garden paradise and that she has a god as a husband. Their jealousy knows no bounds. They come to the crag where Psyche had been chained and call down to her in the garden. They send the best of wishes and inquire about her health. Psyche naively reports all this to Eros (...) He tells her that if she pays attention to her inquiring sisters there will be a disaster (...) If Psyche continues unquestioning, her child (...) will be a god, but if she breaks her vow (...) the child will be born a mortal and a girl. And he, Eros, will go away. Psyche listens and again agrees not to ask questions. But the sisters keep coming and calling. Finally, Psyche draws from Eros permission to let them come and visit her. Soon after, the sisters are wafted down from the high crag by the West Wind and deposited safely in the garden. They admire everything, they are fed and shown about, and of course, they are green with envy at their sister's good fortune. They ask many questions. Psyche says that her husband is a very young man (...) and that he spends his time hunting. She heaps extravagent presents upon her sisters and sends them home.

Eros again warns Psyche, but she allows her sisters to come back. This time, forgetting what she had told them before, she says her husband is a middle-aged man with greying hair who is prominent in the affairs of the world. When the sisters leave, they discuss all this and between them devise a venomous plan. When they come the third time, they tell Psyche that her husband is actually a serpent, a loathsome creature, and that when the baby is born, he plans to devour both her and the child. The sisters propose a plan to avert this. They advise Psyche to get a lamp, put it in a covered vessel, and have it ready in the bed chamber. They also tell her to take the sharpest knife available and have it beside her on the couch. In the middle of the night, when her husband is fast asleep she must sever the head of this loathsome creature with her knife. Psyche is taken in by all this and makes these preparations: a light that can be uncovered in the middle of the night and a knife that she whets to fine sharpness.

Eros comes to the couch after dark and falls asleep beside Psyche. In the night she takes the cover off the lamp, grasps the knife, stands over her husband, and looks at him. To her utter amazement (...) she sees that he is a god, the god of love (...) She is so shaken (...) that she thinks of killing herself. She fumbles with the knife and drops it. She pricks herself accidentally on one of Eros's

arrows and falls in love with him. She jostles the lamp and a drop of oil from it falls on Eros's right shoulder, and he wakes in pain from the hot oil. He sees what has happened and (...) takes flight. Psyche clings to him and is carried a little way with him out of paradise. But she soon falls to the earth in exhaustion and desolation, Eros alights nearby. He says that she has disobeyed [that] her child will be born a mortal and that he will go away and punish her by his absence. Then he flies away (...) Psyche wants to drown herself in a river. Pan the cloven-footed god is sitting by the river. He sees that Psyche is about to drown herself, and dissuades her. [He] tells Psyche that she must pray to the god of love (...) She goes to the altars of the many goddesses instead of to Eros to ask for help, and she is rejected time after time. Each of the goddesses fears Aphrodite and will not anger her by helping Psyche (...) Finally Psyche realizes that she must go to Aphrodite herself, because it is she who holds the key to all of her difficulties (...) Aphrodite gives a bitter tyrannical speech. Psyche is reduced to nothing. She is told that she is good for nothing, except to be a scullery maid, and that if there is any place in the world for her, which is doubtful, it is to be set to the lowest task possible, which is precisely what Aphrodite proceeds to do. The first of the four famous tasks is laid out for Psyche as a condition for her deliverance (...) Aphrodite shows Psyche a huge pile of seeds of many different kinds mixed together and tells her she must sort these seeds before nightfall or the penalty will be death (...) Psyche is left with this impossible task (...) So she sits again and waits (...) ants hear of Psyche's dilemma and sort the seeds for her. By dusk the task is completed and when Aphrodite comes back to check on the situation, he allows that Psyche has done well.

The second task (...) is to go to a certain field across a river and get some of the golden fleece of the rams that are pastured there. She is to be back by night fall on pain of death. Once more [Psyche] collapses and thinks of suicide. She goes towards the river, intending to throw herself in. But just at the critical moment the reeds in the river's edge speak to her and give her advice. The reeds tell Psyche not to go near the rams during the daylight hours to get the wool - she would immediately be battered to death - but to go at dusk and take some of their wool that has been brushed off by the brambles and low hanging boughs of a grove of trees that stand in the field and under which the rams often pass. There she will get enough of the golden fleece to satisfy Aphrodite without even attracting the attention of the rams (...) Aphrodite now appears and discovers that Psyche has the bit of golden fleece. In her anger she decides to really defeat Psyche. She tells the girl that she must fill a crystal goblet with water from the styx, a river that tumbles from a high mountain, disappears into the earth, and comes back to the high mountain again (...) This stream is guarded by dangerous monsters (...) Psyche collapses, this time she is numb with defeat and cannot

> even cry. Then an eagle of Zeus appears. The eagle flies to her in her distress and asks her to give him the crystal goblet (...) Flying to the centre of the stream, he lowers the goblet into the dangerous waters, fills it for her, and brings the vessel safely back to Psyche (...)
> [Psyche's fourth task is to] go into the underworld and obtain from the hand of Persephone (...) a little cask of her own beauty ointment. Psyche again collapses. This time (...) a tower gives her instructions for her underworld journey. Psyche is to take two coins in her mouth and two pieces of barley bread in her hands. She must refuse to assist a lame donkey driver who will ask her to pick up some sticks. She must pay the ferryman over the river Styx with one of the coins. She must refuse the groping hand of a dying man as he reaches up out of the water. She must refuse to assist three women who are weaving the threads of fate. She is to toss one of the pieces of barley bread to Cerberus, the three headed dog who guards the entrance to hell, and while the three heads are quarreling over the bread she is to go in. She is to refuse to eat anything but the simplest food in the underworld. And then she is to repeat the whole process in reverse on her way back (...) So Pysche goes on her journey to the underworld (...) [she] gets the cask of beauty ointment and comes away (...) [She brings it] up to the surface of the earth and then (...) she is suddenly overwhelmed by the thought that if this ointment is so precious to Aphrodite, why wouldn't it be good for her? So she opens the casket. Not beauty but a deadly sleep comes out of it and pours over her. Psyche falls to the ground as if dead (...) When this happens Eros (...) flies to Psyche, wipes the sleep off her, puts it back into the casket, closes the lid, picks Psyche up and takes to Olympus (...) Eros talks with Zeus, who agrees that Psyche shall be made a goddess, to which Aphrodite raises no objection (...) The gods all agree, and Eros and Psyche are married. She gives birth to a girl whom they name Pleasure. (Johnson, 1977).

It has been more difficult for me to find a meaning for this myth than to the Grail Quest, because I've always been more familiar with the latter or at least with its distorted themes. I'm referring to what I said earlier on about the Superwoman theme and the male standards of perfection I've internalized (see also Chapter 6). At first I reacted strongly against Psyche whom I labelled passive, gullible and weak. I've since learned to control my animus

dominated ego and tried to treat Psyche more gently. My exploration of the myth led me to acknowledge that Psyche, just like Parsifal, had achieved wholeness, that her quest was equally harrowing and exacting, but of a different nature.

It does not make sense to analyse this myth, yet a few conceptual references are needed in order to explain the different themes.

In this myth I see connections between what Psyche goes through and the three stages of development of consciousness M. Esther Harding (1983) calls the "naive", "the sophisticated", "the conscious".

At first Psyche is "unconscious", she is dominated by her animus symbolized by Eros, whom she is obeying. Then she falls prey to her shadow: her sisters who, nevertheless, have a positive aspect in that they are urging Psyche to confront her animus. Just as the young Parsifal could not take the Grail experience at first, Psyche is not ready to face her animus directly and Eros vanishes.

This marks the end of the "naive" phase; she enters a period of "sophistication". As she deals with the tasks assigned by Aphrodite, she develops her potential in very specific ways: we are told that she stands still and waits until she gets the resources to cope with the task. For Johnson this stillness and receptivity represents the essence of the female principle:

> A woman, or the the feminine principle seems to have to go back to a very still inner centre every time something happens to her; and this is a creative act. She must go back to it, but must not drown in it. (Johnson, 1977).

Eros, the animus,is now back in the inner world and is able to mediate for her and to help her find the strength and wisdom she needs. Psyche's descent to the underworld and her death suggest that individuation is achieved through the confrontation with the dark sides of the unconscious an experience which, for any woman who is ready to undertake this task, is both destructive and life enhancing. At the end of the myth, Psyche becomes "conscious", she has faced prosaic reality and she is able to relate to her animus. The main themes of the myth: stillness, receptivity and relatedness as a female predisposition have been widely discussed in the Jungian literature. I shall now present my appreciation of several jungian theories dealing with aspects of the feminine, I shall also show how they helped me to acknowledge the changing expressions of the archetypes and the plurality of ways of being female.

D) From relatedness to re-vision

Emma Jung presents a clear analysis of the feminine mentality:

> Receptivity is a feminine attitude, presupposing openness and emptiness wherefore Jung has termed it the great secret of femininity. Moreover the feminine mentality is less averse to irrationality than the rationally oriented masculine consciousness, which tends to reject everything not conforming to reason and so frequently shuts itself off from the unconscious. (Jung, 1974).

The creativity of women is expressed in human relationships:

> What matters to women is the personal relation and this is also true of the anima. Her tendency is to entangle man in such relationships, but she can also serve him well in giving them shape - that is she can do so after the feminine element has been incorporated into consciousness. (Jung, 1974).

For Claremont de Castillejo it is the "diffuse awareness" (as opposed to "focussed consciousness") which defines what pertains to women or to the feminine part of the psyche. Its characteristics are "acceptance, awareness of the unity of life and readiness for relationships" whereas the basic masculine attitude is that of "focus, division and change." From the difference between a man and a woman's mind she draws the notion of woman as the mediator to man. Her views are in the same vein as Emma Jung:

> Woman's role is to be a mediator to man of his own creative inspirations, a channel whereby the riches of the unconscious can flow to him more easily than if she were not there. To be a true mediator to the masculine, whether it be an actual man or the masculine in herself, requires not speech but consciousness on the part of the woman. (Claremont de Castillejo, 1973).

No matter how important the reconciliation with the animus is, I find the role of woman as a mediator to man quite restrictive. It also struck me that these women were not terribly concerned with women's relationships with each other or with friendship.

Emma Jung voiced ideas in the context of her generation who believed that the sexes were strongly differentiated psychologically and physically. But I have also felt that in the choice of the language she used, she had a certain contempt for women:

> Where a man takes up objective problems, a woman <u>contents herself</u> with solving riddles, where he battles for knowledge and understanding, she contents herself with faith or superstition or else she makes assumptions. (Jung, 1974) (my emphasis).

In many instances, the woman's movement is caricatured and devalued. For example, M.Esther-Harding talks of the "aggressive woman of the feminist movement" in order to put forward, yet again, the image of

woman as a mediator. So I looked somewhere else for a theory which would keep in touch with centuries old heritage and with the changing manifestation of archetypes, which would validate the many ways of being feminine (and masculine).

Toni Wolff's (1956) study of four types of female personalities (Maternal, Hetaira, Amazon, Mediumistic) opens the way for more differentiation and fluidity in the analysis of the feminine.

Each type has specific traits. The Maternal woman cherishes all that is young, tender and growing, men are perceived as fathers. The Hetaira relates to a man for his own sake. She is his companion whether intellectually, spiritually or sexually. She is the "femme inspiratrice" who carries a man's anima. The Amazon is independent, self-contained. She is not depending on men for fulfilment and has no mediator role. She sees men as brothers and meets them on a conscious level. The Mediumistic woman mediates to the man the contents of the collective unconscious.

Yet these types are still assessed in terms of their relationship with men. It is paradoxical to think that archetypes defie time and yet their expression is embodied in the cultural. On this issue, Whitmont (1980) brings interesting developments to the notions of masculine and feminine dynamics. He takes into account the very recent re-emergence of the feminine in the collective value system to assess the changing manifestations of the archetypes.

For him, the Eros principle as "tendency to relatedness" is terminologically and psychologically inappropriate to characterize

the feminine. Mythologically, Eros is a male deity; he is:

> An aggressive hunter, Plato's mighty daimon, the instinctual urge to connect, to touch, to possess, he motivates man's urge to connect with man and his quest for the beautiful, the good and the divine. He expresses aggressive libido, striving desirousness and the insistent urge to join, connect, possess and to penetrate. (Whitmont, 1980).

These characteristics belong to the archetypal male. As for relatedness, taken in the Eros way, it becomes an achievement that has to be undertaken by both men and women:

> Relationship is a principle of order - order in space or time - and order pertains to the masculine as well as to the feminine principle even though in a differing way. Relatedness, in turn, as a psychological concept has come to mean awareness of relationship inter and intra personally. And this includes attraction and connection as much as repulsion, rejection and aggression, mutuality as much as separateness, inner feelings and thoughts as much as outer interaction, rhythmic and lawful order as much as play or even chaotic confusion, discovery of meaning as much as acceptance of meaninglessness ... Relatedness is not to be confused with the longing for personal involvement and empathetic identification which is indeed a quality typical of the feminine consciousness. (Whitmont, 1980).

But to equate the feminine simply with relationship is not satisfactory as it implies passive reaction and response, but never initiation. In other words, Whitmont aims to show that there is no need to have categories which value the forms of the masculine, setting them as standards, to the detriment of the feminine. He proposes four fundamental aspects of the feminine with autonomous dynamics, regardless of how they may or may not relate to the masculine. To replace Eros, he looks at images of goddesses in order to define aspects of the feminine in their own rights. He considers negative and positive forms of the feminine both at a conscious and anima level:

> The way of Lila is the way of playfulness, charm, attraction, the dance of the senses of the muses, artistic or sensuous ... As an anima figure she gives lightness, playfulness and poetic inspiration. In identification she brings out the puer or puella at their worst.
>
> Luna's femininity is of the full moon . . .She is attuned to the rhythm, tides, needs and possibilities of concrete life expressions. She has the capacity to structure and order her environment and she is attuned to people's needs and possibilities aware of measure, limitations, and proportions... As an anima she primarily constellates the maternal, practical and protective dimension. Negatively she constellates the impersonalness of "Natura naturans".
>
> Pallas Athena creates the career and pioneer woman but also a Florence Nightingale; she is ready to give battle for the sake of concrete human, not abstract needs. As an anima figure she may account for idealistic and utopian pipe dreams or brilliant intuitive insights into new creative possibilities and projects.
>
> Medusa is the abyss of transformation, the seemingly chaotic riddle that woman is to herself and to the puzzled man, hers is the dread of unpredictability and seeming emptiness. Her way is the way of the medium priestess or healer but also of the inspired artist. Negatively constellated she can make for an emotive, hysterical devouring borderline personality . . . the Medusa anima can be met as femme fatale, the "dame sans merci" witch or Death Hag, but also as guardian of the Holy, the initiatrix and femme inspiratrice. Hers is a realm to which every woman and anima must descend for renewal. (Whitmont, 1980).

This actual re-vision of mythology allows for the radical aspect of the woman's movement to become more than an animus possession; the Pallas Athena way does it more justice. It shows that there is a possibility for women to achieve a sense of self-esteem and assertiveness grounded in their sense of connection.

Whitmont's presentation of the masculine and animus ways is equally detailed. Logos loses its preponderant place:

> The Ares type man or animus is a strong warrior, the "go-getter" who sets his goals, relies upon his strength, skill and determination to compete and grab whatever he can get hold of. As an animus quality Ares is the capacity for assertiveness, strength and self reliance when integrated, when cut off from the transformative playful or practical realization aspects of the feminine he operates as unconscious or compulsive hostility and contrariness.
>
> Hephaistos is man the maker and builder ... As animus he makes for a busybody, restless doer, or practical creativity.
>
> The way of Eros is through desire, through psyche and the Muses ... here we find the dreamer and artist. In combination with Ares he acquires more firmness, with an extreme preponderance of both we may have ruthless desire, greed, power demand and exploitation ravishers, rapists.
>
> As animus Eros awakens psyche through aspiration longing and reaching out. He can be a spur to genuine relationships. In his primitive unassimiliated form he demands, expects, desires and must have what he wants.
>
> The preponderence of Logos makes for the scholarly types, the thinker and philosopher ... As animus Logos aims toward discrimination, discovery of meaning and clarity of thought, or negatively operates as the often described 'devil of opinions' as judgemental bias.

I have quoted Whitmont at length because he suggests ideas of integration of the male and female without referring to the concept of androgyny, often used in Jungian literature to explain the process of individuation. Taken as a way of reconciling the two principles, androgyny is too blunt; in the next part I shall discuss its limitations. I shall also show how the Tao provides a more interesting model for understanding the interaction and integration of these two modes.

III Reconciling The Masculine and Feminine Principles

A) Androgyny

I said earlier on that, in the Jungian tradition, the masculine/feminine interaction within each person is considered as the dynamic factor integrating the totality of the psyche. This is the wholistic aspect of androgyny which Singer defines in these terms:

> Nothing works without the interaction of the opposites and this is what androgyny is: the rhythmic interplay of Masculine and Feminine within the psyche of one individual. (Singer, 1977).

Though I agree with her that the interaction of the contrasexual principles is creative, at a personal level, I find this term potentially harmful to the female principle when it is used at a sociological level:

> Androgyny refers to a specific way of joining the masculine and feminine aspects of a single human being. We see much evidence of the trend towards androgyny in our Western world today in social customs, manners and morals, and also in the awareness of millions of people who are searching out ways to expand their consciousness of themselves and the world in which they live. (Singer, 1977).

I think it's too early to talk about the trend towards androgyny. The re-emergence of the feminine principle is recent in our society, we do not know what the return of the goddess fully means. We need to give the female culture more time and space so it can find its own voice and strength in order to be in the position of relating to the masculine principle. If we are too quick in believing that integration can be achieved, the feminine principle is in danger of being distorted and smothered by patriarchy.

This phenomenon for me is evoked by the way the women's movement was stifled in France, by the creation of the Ministry of Women's Rights in 1974. I hope I won't be misunderstood in saying this, because I also believe that it has achieved a lot in its positive influence on the eradication of sexist laws and attitudes, yet because women's issues have been taken over by the mainstream patriarchal culture, the energy for developing a female culture has dwindled especially among younger women. The battle for equality is not their responsibility anymore, they have given the Government the power to speak and act for them. I've witnessed a lack of interest in feminist issues among the French women I know which is in complete contrast with the variety of concerns and ideas held by my British female friends. What is happening isn't integration it doesn't point towards an androgynous age either it can even mean that society will define what women's issues are or aren't from a male viewpoint.

Having expressed my dissatisfaction with androgyny I will consider the interplay and dynamics of the feminine and masculine from a Taoist perspective which provides a model for understanding integration with less patriarchal bias.

B The Tao

Taoist philosophy does not solely consider the relationships between men and women; the human being is not the measure of the universe. All things have their place in Nature and partake of the Yin and Yang.

The graphic representation (overleaf) of the Yin and Yang shows that the two principles are not tightly compartmented but allow for the intrusion of the opposite principle. This symbol represents "all paired existence the complementary poles of nature, but the two are not to be taken as substances or entities, but as qualities inherent in all things ... they partake of all the symbolism of contrary yet co-operating forces." (Cooper, 1972). In other words this model is a dialectical one. The contraries are complementary and yet mutually destructive, but the existence of each is only possible in the context of the other.

There are many symbolic qualities attached to Yin and Yang. The following, non exhaustive list is amalgamated from different authors (Capra (1981), Colegrave (1979), Cooper (1981), Hampden-Turner (1981)).

Yin	Yang
Female	Male
Earth	Heaven
Valley	Mountains
Stream	Rock
Night	Day
Yielding	Forcing
Absorbing	Penetrating
Rest	Movement
Autumn-Winter	Spring-Summer
Relationship	Individuation
Space	Time
Community	Hierarchy/order
Not judging	Judging
Purposeless	Purpose
Nourisher	Fertiliser
Unity	Polarity
Acausal	Causal
Spontaneous	Planned
Oneness	Differentiation
Physical	Intelligence
Emotional	Energy
Cerebral Inertia	Spiritual
Moon	Sun
Moisture	Dryness

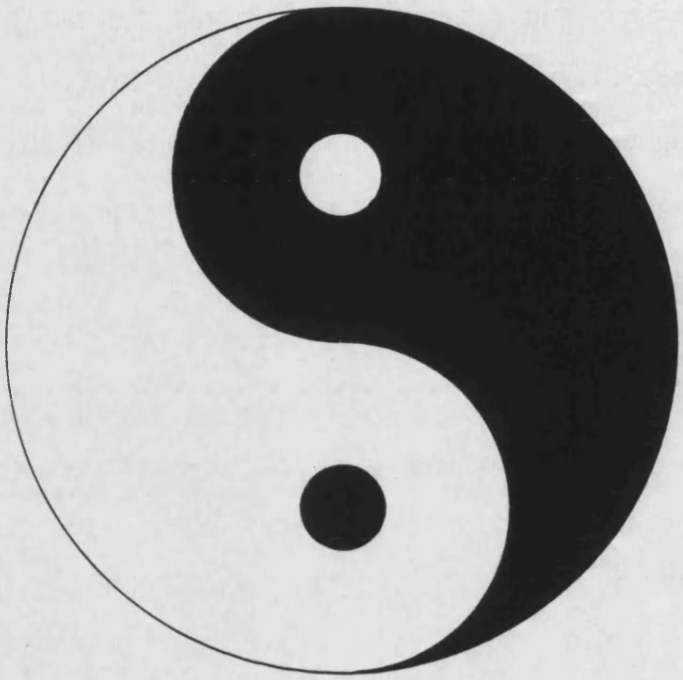

Figure 7.1 Yin Yang Symbol

Yin	Yang
Coolness	Warmth
Interior	Surface
Contractive	Demanding
Responsive	Aggressive
Cooperative	Competitive
Intuitive	Rational
Synthesizing	Analytic
Grounding	Abstracting

Yin is also praised in Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching, a book of wisdom which expresses the archetypal images of the Tao, the Principle which underlies everything in the universe.

Various passages in the Tao describe life as female and purely receptive, other chapters advise stillness, openness and non-action (Wu-wei).

Book 1, Chap. 16:

> Create emptiness up to the highest
> Grand stillness up to the most complete
> Then all things may rise together
> I see how they return (...)
> (Lao Tzu, Wilhem edition, 1985).

For Taoism, it is from the vacuum that all forms in manifestation emerge and return.

Book 1, Chapter 28:

> He who knows the masculine and yet keeps to the feminine
> Will become a channel drawing all the world towards it
> Being a channel of the world, he will not be severed from the eternal virtue
> And then he can return again to the state of infancy (...)
> (Lao Tzu, Ch'u Ta-Kao Translation, 1982).

Yin is the means by which the Yang intellect attains insight and understanding. The most powerful way of expressing this process is

through the symbolism of Alchemy:

> Yin the Alchemical Quicksilver or feminine power dissolves the masculine Sulphur, the Yang and activates it through tension rousing it to its true nature, the Sulphur then fixes the volatile Quicksilver and the interplay between the two generative forces liberates them from their limitations. (Cooper, 1981).

For me this notion of liberation denotes a kind of balance and harmony without the static connotation which often accompanies these ideas.

Furthermore, for Taoist philosophers, the notion of balance is not an abstract aesthetic concept but is rather exacting and rigourous. The Tao encompasses Nature which, if badly treated, will take its revenge:

> Harmony is not an emotional or pleasure giving response though emotional balance would be impossible without it, but a mind controlled and universal necessity, exacting in its demands and severe in its repercussions with natural primitive consequences if the laws of balance and harmony are disobeyed. (Cooper, 1981).

This would nowadays be called ecological thinking and makes sense if one considers that more of something does not make things better but worse, more rational Yang means degenerate Yang; more pesticides do not increase production but instead destroy the fertility of the soil, more medicines make us ill as they create side effects and so on. I do not know what degenerate Yin entails as we never had too much of it. The literature tells me that too much Yin involves chaos.

Looking back on this cycle of the research will help me close it and decide on new directions to take in my inquiry.

IV Closing Cycle II

My exploration on the nature of female experience and of the feminine stops here momentarily.

I have encountered at both societal and psychological levels, many theories analysing women's experience and qualities, celebrating their differences and the positive contribution they can make to society. I have also found support for the idea that female ways of being in groups have a value of their own. With jungian analysis, I have discovered that these female qualities are available to men, that women have access to male qualities. I have stumbled into unknown regions, into the field of archetypal masculine and feminine principles which transcend human existence. The journey has, up to now, been fascinating since this cycle of research has mainly been about discovery.

I now need to get into another phase in my inquiry, to stand back and assess how I have conducted my research. In the next cycle, I shall be concerned with issues of valid and consider at different levels what makes a piece of research valid.

C Y C L E I I I

INTRODUCTION

In this cycle I shall deal with issues of personal and empirical validity.

In Chapter Eight, I shall first consider the issue of personal validity. I never believed that I could be 'objective' in my research, that I could leave behind my experience, values, likes and dislikes whilst researching into 'female' processes. Thus for me validity starts at a personal level, with the rigorous exploration of the resistance, confusion and other personal processes which have been part of my sense making of the theories and experiences presented in Cycles I and II.

Throughout my research I have paid attention to these personal processes, regarding the times of confusion as an opportunity for pausing and reflecting on my relationships with my research topic. I have often delved into my past in order to identify the 'ghosts' which were interferring with my inquiry, attempting to develop an awareness of my compulsive patterns of behaviour which emerged whilst doing research, welcoming the opportunity for growing my exploration of female processes had given me.

In the first part of Chapter Eight I shall present an example of such explorations. It took place when I became anxious at the idea of writing up this thesis and found myself unable to work. In the second part of Chapter Eight, I am concerned with empirical validity; I move "outward" from the exploration of my inner world to the assessment of my relationship with the outside world. In the

introduction to this thesis I have explained my dissatisfaction with my cultural cartesian background, with the objective experimental approach which treats people like objects. With the notion of personal validity by placing myself at the centre of the research, I was not solely concerned with getting away from an 'objective' way of doing research but also with a rigorous exploration of my subjectivity. This exploration continues with the assessment of my relationship with the outside world and with people. I am especially concerned with checking whether the ideas developed, mostly on my own in Cycle II, make sense and are relevant to other people. Then I explain how the need to check the validity of my theoretical developments led me to organise a workshop, inviting people who had an awareness of group work to explore and respond to my ideas on female processes.

In Chapter Nine, I present in detail the methodology and aims of the workshop, while in Chapter Ten I give the account of what happened during the workshop.

C H A P T E R E I G H T

PERSONAL AND EMPIRICAL VALIDITY

A Personal Validity

With this thesis, I have been faced with the difficult prospect of sharing with the reader my experience of researching into small groups which led me to build up a theory on male and female processes. I am now in my middle twenties and I consider that what I explored during the research, especially the male and female principles, takes a life-time to sort out, assess and integrate.

It has been suggested to me that I should write this thesis when I am 80. This suggestion was half serious and indeed it might be more relevant to write up this thesis in the light of a lifetime experience. But I feel that I have got something to share now. I need to unclutter my mind, to reach some conclusions but not the sort of conclusions which would send my mind to sleep in the certainty that I have reached the "truth". I am talking about conclusions which help me to gather my ideas in an articulate way into a whole but which can be taken to pieces again in the light of new ideas. Thus I regard this thesis as an apprenticeship rather than as a complete finished product.

Writing has never been an easy task for me. I have never been able to be a "9 to 5" researcher, I have never built a big wall between my research and the rest of myself. In many ways I understand the criticisms Capra addresses to those scientists who keep what they know compartmentalized, who are unwilling to integrate their science into their lives. He says of the physicists who go home from the laboratory and live their lives "as if Newton not Einstein were right - as if the world were fragmented and mechanical"; that "they

don't seem to realize the philosophical, cultural and spiritual implications of their theories" (in Ferguson, 1982). This attitude is alien to me; from the start, I have allowed reflections on the male and female to invade my own life. This invasion had been energizing and full of learnings at many levels but had also made me unable to write up this thesis. For a long time, I was busy listening to the voices and noises which were fighting each other in my head. They were disabling me, leaving me numb and panic stricken. It was impossible to ignore them, they only became louder. I had to acknowledge the inner reality of these bouncy 'sub-personalities' (Assagioli, 1965). Eventually I decided to meet these characters, to engage in a dialogue with them through a psychosynthesis based guided fantasy. Before presenting this dialogue, I think the concept of sub-personalities needs to be illuminated by a few theoretical references.

I Sub-personalities: A Theoretical Background

The concept of sub-personalities in itself is not new, it does not solely belong to the psychiatric literature. Janet (1889) observed that there are mental activities taking place independently of the patient's consciousness and even real 'secondary personalities' living behind, or alternating with the everyday personality. James (1890) used the term 'various selves' in his study of the 'stream of consciousness' to describe the multi-levelled flow that characterises human mental activity. The most comprehensive view on sub-personalities was developed by Assagioli while formulating his psychosynthesis method.

Psychosynthesis, a practical method which encompasses many of the approaches to personal growth, stresses the importance of the concept and experience of "identity". But in everyday life, in the various roles we have to perform, we display various, often antagonistic, traits which are not integrated. Assagioli believes that working from within, on synthesizing the useful traits of these often very different beings into a whole helps us to experience the self:

> Another disadvantage is that revealing the different roles, traits, etc., emphasizes the reality of the observing self. During and after this assessment of the sub-personalities one realizes that the observing self is one of them but something or somebody different from each. (Assagioli, 1965).

After doing the exercise which allowed me to recognize and give shape to my sub-personalities, I felt that the "I" who eventually managed to write this thesis was different from my other selves.

My decision to include excerpts of the dialogues with my sub-personalities in the present work is based on the hope that revealing something of my inner world will clarify, maybe illuminate the more academic chapters. I believe that some form of self-development should accompany each stage of an inquiry into the social sciences. In the context of a methodology which stresses the importance of using one's own subjectivity, anxiety and blocks become part of the research process if they are explored in a constructive way.

This is what Devereux is concerned with in his book on countertransference in the social sciences. This term is used to define a moment in the psychoanalytical cure, when distortions occur

in:

> the psychoanalyst perception and reaction to his patient which cause him to respond to his patient as though he was an early image and to act in the analytic situation in terms of his own fantasy, usually infantile unconscious needs, wishes and fantasies. (Devereux, 1967).

Countertransference in behavioural sciences occurs where researchers repress their emotional involvement with their research as it contradicts the belief that they can be 'objective'. This attitude stirs up anxieties and is responsible for cluttering research with autobiographical details unconsciously added to the design by unaware researchers.

About countertransference Devereux says:

> The greatest obstacle to the creation of a scientific behavioural science is the instigator's improperly used emotional involvement with his material, which in the final analysis, is himself and therefore inevitably arouses anxiety. (Devereux, 1967).

Whereas if the problems posed by countertransference are worked on creatively then social scientists will actually begin to do some scientific work:

> The so-called disturbances created by the observer's existence and activities when properly exploited are the cornerstones of a scientific behavioural science. (Devereux, 1967).

Devereux suggests that there are two main ways of reaching self-awareness: real friendship because "it gives one a way of relating to experiences which one cannot have oneself", and psychoanalysis. I have already showed how the friends who took part in the SHG have

helped me to gain insights into female processes. As for the second suggestion I resist strongly Freudian psychoanalysis and find humanistic psychology based methods much more suited to my needs.

Before presenting the conversations with my sub-personalities, I shall introduce the psychosynthesis influenced exercise designed by Rowan which allowed me to meet them. I shall also introduce the inner selves who presented themselves to me.

II Meeting with My Sub-personalities

I went through the guided fantasy in a safe environment, during a supervision session; the dialogues were recorded on video:

After relaxing for a few minutes, I was told to:

> Imagine that you're on a beach, somewhere ... imagine yourself standing on a beach, pay attention to what surrounds you, feel the quality of the sand on your feet, feel the air and the wind on your face blowing away, hear the sound of the water, have a good look around you, see what it's like.
> There's a road which comes up to this beach, look around you until you can see the road, you can see along this road quite a long way, quite a long way into the distance there is this road which leads up to where you are, imagine how it comes along whether it's straight or bending, imagine how it comes up to the beach.
> Now on this road is a bus, it's coming along to the beach and you know that on this bus are all the characters that are speaking to you, all these voices that are speaking to you when you do your research, when you do your writing, they are all there on the bus. It's coming along towards the beach, as it gets to the beach, it stops in front of you, the doors open and out of the bus are going to come all these characters one by one, they're going to get off one by one so you can see them all, you're going to tell us about them so we can hear what they are, what they look like, when you're ready start telling us about the characters as they get off the bus.

Several characters got off the bus on my tropical beach. I've named the first one to appear the Red Witch; then came the Executive or Square Lady, the School girl, three grey ghosts whom I later christened the Voices of Fate, the Practical Man and the Little Boy. Some characters are very important but stay remarkably silent; others are much more talkative. I'll start by describing the quieter ones.

Among these quiet sub personalities is the Little Boy: he is very shy: I had to beckon him several times before he decided to come out of the bus where he was hiding behind the back seats. He is about nine years old, dark skinned, of mediterranean type, with big eyes expressing sadness. When he finally comes on the beach, he keeps away from the others. When I asked him if he was frightened by the others he said he was; although he didn't dislike people he preferred to observe them rather than taking part in social activities. He intrigued me when he said that he didn't fit very well in society, that he didn't know the rules of the social game but was convinced that he would find them out. While I was talking to the others and struggling with the Red Witch he told me that he felt sorry for me but that there was nothing he could do for me.

The Voices of Fate are three women who all look alike. Their grey hair, the grey rags they are dressed in give them a ghostly appearance. They are very thin, fragile and powerful at the same time. I tried several times to touch them, I couldn't: they have a foggy almost immaterial texture. When I first met them, their intention was to take me back to the bus with them; I resisted them but I didn't know why. I couldn't hear what they were telling me,

their voices were very faint, blurred by the fog that surrounded them. It's difficult for me to decide whether I'm not ready to listen to them or whether I'm not supposed to hear them, whether I'm not meant to confront the Voices of Fate.

The Practical Man who is a strong built man in his fifties isn't very talkative either. He is the one who drove all these characters to the beach; this made him jumpy for he seems to think that it's more than his job is worth. He wants to make life as simple as possible for himself and he feels bored almost threatened by the conversation which is too intellectual for his liking. He wants to be in control of the others, put them back on the bus and drive them away.

The Red Witch, The Executive, the Schoolgirl are, in opposition to the quieter characters, much noisier but in different ways. The first one got her name from the colour of her hair, a flamboyant red but also from her ferocious temper. When she arrived on the beach she couldn't even wait for the bus to stop to get off. She lept out of it, started to run after me shrieking and waving her arms. Her main function is to create chaos wherever she is. She is also the "self hater", Doris Lessing has described in the "Four Gated City":

> Then one of the voices detached itself and came close into her inner being: it was loud or it was soft; it was jaunty, or it was intimately jeering, but its abiding quality was an antagonism; a dislike of Martha; and Martha was crying out against it. She needed to apologise, to beg for forgiveness she needed to please and to self absolution, she was grovelling on the carpet, weeping while the voice uttered acusation of hatred. (Lessing, 1972).

The Red Witch laughs at me, mocks everything I say. She is highly

critical of me. She is a formidable character who used to terrify me. Recently, I have been able to see the more positive aspects of her personality. As I got to know her better, I managed to stand up to her. At times, I even enjoy the verbal battles which characterizes our conversation. She is energizing as she constantly questions different aspects of my research, I gradually learn to become more articulate in my ideas. At other times, she becomes again the cynical, mocking old witch who used to terrify me.

The Executive or Square Lady is much more supportive than the witch. She is keen on achieving a way of life which is rewarded by our culture and is dressed accordingly in a neat dark suit. She is a conformist and expects me to be the same. She wants to protect me against the other characters especially those who have a more unusual message than hers. She wants to give me advice on how to do my work and lead my life which I find slightly irritating and patronizing.

The Schoolgirl is a young self. She is a pretty child with long blond hair and rosey cheeks; her name comes from the navy blue school uniform she's wearing. She has a fun loving, inquisitive personality; as soon as she arrived on the beach she started exploring it, asking me to come to play with her. She is self-confident, even cheeky at times, she can stand up to the Witch and is the only one who dares tease her. She wants me to realize that writing is fun and creative, she believes that I should take the risk to express what I have to say in the way which is the most relevant to me.

When I felt in touch with the different characters ie. when they held enough substance and a personality of their own, I started talking to them, role-playing each one of them, listening to what they had to say. I have chosen to present some of the conversations we had about my research and writing blocks in order to show how the noises and voices I mentioned earlier on in this chapter, had by then become articulate:

I

E: I can't write, every line is painful.

Red Witch: Your problem is that you're not listening to me. If you'd done your Ph.D. my way, if you weren't resisting my power it would have been less painful. It's all your fault.

E: So you're the one who is stopping me from writing. Can I ask you what's wrong with <u>my</u> way of doing this Ph.D?

R.W.: It's wishy-washy. It's got nothing to do with real life. It's intellectual rubbish. I would give it up if I were you.

E: I won't give up. You'd be too pleased. Deep down that's what you want.

R.W.: Carry on then but people are going to have a good laugh when they read it. You'll never get a job. Employers

will think you're a weirdo.

E: I'm frightened, stop confusing me.

Executive Lady: There, don't worry. I'm going to protect you. Don't listen to her. Just calm down, start writing.

R.W.: She hasn't got anything to write about.

Little Boy: What she knows can't easily be put into words.

R.W.: Excuses, excuses. The point is that you haven't read enough, especially in the field of traditional literature. You haven't got anything to write about.

E: Hang on that's not true, I've read enough of these books to think that they are dishonest, alienating, manipulative.

R.W.: You're criticizing for the sake of it. In fact they bore you. As soon as something requires some effort you debunk it and start with something else.

E: Jung wasn't specially easy to read, I didn't give up.

School Girl: I'm bored, come on have fun you can't carry on being tortured by this old witch. Have a break, ignore her.

Exec L: No, get on with it, get it over with. You've been at

University too long now. You can't be a permanent student. You must start a career soon. I know that's the right thing for you.

E: You all seem to know what's good for me, none of you really convince me. Why is it that I don't know what to do?

L. Boy: She can't write because her Ph.D. has been so much part of her own development that it is herself who is being assessed not just her ability to produce a thesis. If it's laughed at then she will feel completely rejected.

R.W: The kid is very good at manipulating the reader, you want them to feel sorry for her is that it?

L.B. is silent now.

School G: If what he says is true, then you shouldn't take things so much to heart.

II

Exec L: Doesn't it worry you to have embarked on this journey, to leave behind people you care for but who don't understand what you're on about. Why don't you stop when there's still time? Get a job, get a career, have kids, do what everybody else does.

E: You're just as dangerous as the witch. There's some truth in what you're saying. I feel sad when I try to explain what has happened to me and I meet incredulity. I wish I could take everybody with me but I can't change people.

I'm tempted to follow your way when I'm tired or depressed. But it won't be easy for you to win me to your views on how I should lead my life. The Witch won't let you.

R.W.: At least you admit that I am useful for something. What the Exec. is talking about is just another cliche on what a woman should be: liberated but ladylike, homemaking and bread winning: Superwoman. Beware.

E: You certainly don't mince your words. Why can't you be kinder to me some time. How about being a fairy god mother for a change?

R.W.: You enjoy the fight.

E: The Square Lady might be talking about integration.

R.W.: Or about a male trip? About the busy syndrome?

E: You're full of contradiction what you were saying earlier on sounded very similar to the Square Lady's advice.

R.W.: At least it keeps you alert and alive.

E: I see. Your role is to contradict everything I think and say. When are you going to stop confusing me? This Ph.D. is dying to come out.

III

R.W.: Your theories are plain ridiculous. Who has ever heard of male and feamle processes. A pure product of your imagination. You haven't got much data to support your ideas.

School Girl: Why can't research be imaginative? Why can't she play with ideas? Her Ph.D. is not supposed to win the Nobel Prize.

E: We're not going to start a methodological discussion are we?

Exec L: The point is that you must be careful with what you're saying, otherwise you'll be labelled as one of those women's libbers.

E: That's your problem.

Exec L: That's yours too, it could restrict your choices in the future.

E: It may be true, though not many people are going to read this thesis so I'm safe. But nothing will even change, if these things are not said loud.

Exec L: Again, your need for risk. You must control yourself a bit more. At your age you shouldn't be so idealistic.

R.W.: Saint Elisabeth.

E: You two are really making me angry.

School G.:Tell them exactly what you think of them. Go on.

Little B.:Say nothing, you don't know how.

III Conclusions

After spending a few sessions role playing these conversations with my subpersonalities I felt that they were becoming more quiet. As I got to know them better, I felt more self-confident and resumed writing up this thesis.

Obviously these characters haven't stopped talking to me but the constant war in my head has stopped for when they need to make themselves heard, I can tell who is talking and what he or she is up to. The main purpose of the exercise was initially to overcome my fear of writing but it has also enabled me to become more aware of what I am writing and where it is coming from. I can tell who is

trying to influence me in the presentation of a particular idea in the thesis. This doesn't necessarily mean that I control the voice who is making a suggestion but noticing his or her presence allows me to engage in a dialogue between the self who writes and this other part of myself who needs to contribute something to the research. I now make space for talking with my sub-personalities in order to explore carefully my involvement with the research material; this makes me more aware of countertransference. In other words, working on myself has helped me to develop some personal validity to the research process as I now have the tools which help me to relate to my thesis in a more aware, less anxious way.

But personal validity is not the only form of validity I'm concerned with; engaging in some discipline for personal maintenance needs to be complemented with reflections on the nature of the relationships with the people who are involved in the research and with how it is conducted. In the next part of this chapter, I shall deal with this empirical validity issue.

B Empirical Validity

After considering the question of personal validity and the management of blocks and anxieties, the last stage of the research deals with empirical validity. Having developed ideas experientally and found anchors in the literature in order to make sense of them, I am now concerned with assessing myself against two criteria: "Do the concepts make sense to others?" and "to what extent are they useful to them?"

My dissatisfaction with the orthodox way of doing research grew with the awareness that no matter how "neat" a theory is, if it does not mean anything to those who are not involved in academic research then it is not valid. I believe that there is a lot of "ivory tower" type of research which hides its shortcomings behind a sophisticated jargon. As Lewin puts it powerfully: "Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice" (1947). There is a political dimension to research which has been too often left out of the research debate. Research is about encountering people, sharing our experiences, producing useful concepts and eventually drawing strength from this newly gained knowledge to act in the world.

I turned to those alternative methods which consider encounter with experience and encounter with persons to be a fundamental part of the research process. Thus, I believe my criteria to be akin to the new paradigm research philosophy and principles on validity put forward by Reason and Rowan. The primary strength of new paradigm methodology lies in its emphasis on experiential and collaborative research. This involves the joint encounter between one's own

experience, other's experience and the outside world throughout the different stages of research. I shall develop these notions in the next section of this chapter.

I Issues of Validity in New Paradigm Research

Reason and Rowan are concerned with getting away from the traditional views on validity which are all about methods but do not pay much attention to people. If research is a personal process then questions like "how will I know, and how will we know?" should be at the centre of a researcher's reflections on validity. In new paradigm terms, validity is still about looking at the notion of truth but in a way that differs from the truth the traditional paradigm talks about. In the latter case, its definition is based on the idea that "reality" can be known objectively through carefully controlled experiments. But if Reason and Rowan reject this subject-object split, they do not assume either that truth is completely subjective and therefore ineffable. For Reason and Rowan the research process starts in the subjective with the day to day naive type of thinking which is relevant, committed and intuitive but is also prone to the errors of our biases, prejudices and anxieties. However in their opinion, in order to become rigorous and systematic in our inquiry, we must develop an approach which is neither wholly based on orthodox research nor on naive inquiry.

It is possible to reconcile the objective-subjective polarity using the dialectical notion of perspective developed by Schwartz and

Olgivy (1979). The term defines "a personal view from some distance and suggests neither the universality of objectivity nor the personal bias of subjectivity" (Schwartz and Olgivy, 1979). In this sense reality becomes a process and is viewed dynamically:

> So we have to learn to think dialectically, to view reality as a process, always emerging through a self contradictory development, always becoming. Reality is neither subject nor object, it is both wholly independent of me and wholly dependent on me. This means that any notion of validity must concern itself both with the knower and with what is to be known: valid knowledge is a matter of relationship. (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

Thus considering whether an idea is "right" or "true" is not very illuminating, if it is not replaced in the context of intersubjective interpretation, meaning in Heron's terms (1981), that an idea is true if "it is right for a group of people who share a similar world". New paradigm research puts emphasis on encountering people which resolves the problem of one-sidedness. Meeting people also increases understanding of a phenomenon; this is achieved through the exploration of its diversity and through experience sharing.

Torbert goes beyond the idea of being right when he says:

> By positing the broad notions of analytical, political and ontological validity I mean to remind us that we are always confronted with three simultaneous dilemmas: (1) whether we are right given our way of framing the situation (2) whether we ought or ought not to allow ourselves to be interrupted by other claims to our attention to the environment; and (3) whether our way of framing the situation is in fact fruitful and meaningful. Balance among these dilemmas sharpens the questions and counters one-sidedness. (Torbert, 1981).

The potential threats to validity in this type of inquiry appear at two levels. The first threat is subjective one-sidedness which

occurs when the researcher becomes swamped by those aspects of her inquiry which stir up anxiety in her; she projects her restimulated distress, prejudices and character rigidity onto the studied phenomenon. It is possible to work on the distress and one's own bias in order to become a good enough researcher. Only then can a researcher engage in valid action. As Torbert puts it:

> A person must undergo a to him unimaginable scale of self-development before he becomes capable of relationally valid action. (Torbert, 1981).

In my case, dealing with my writing blocks is only one example of the work I have done on myself. Apart from setting up, taking part in and working on my role in the self-help therapy group presented in Chapter Three, I have also been involved at other stages of the research in some form of self-development activity such as co-counselling, art therapy and assertiveness training.

The second threat to validity concerns "consensus collusion" which happens when the encounter is marred by group defences built up by researchers in order to:

> sustain a tacit norm to the effect that certain areas of experience, ranges of human potentiality, behavioural possibilities, shall be overlooked so that the adequacy of the theory is not called experientially into question. (Heron, 1981).

These group defences can be countered in the same way as with personal defence. If the group pays attention to its processes and work on its defences, then this aspect of the group work also becomes part of the research set up and brings new dimensions to it.

So validity has to do with how skillful the researchers are, not how

refined the instrument of measure is. Diesing reminds us that:

> the only instrument that is good enough for studying human beings is man himself. The only acceptable mechanical devices are those that assist the human observer (cameras, tape recorders) rather than pretend to substitute for him. (Diesing, 1972).

In this context it is clear that:

> Validity is more personal and interpersonal rather than methodological. (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

Maintaining a certain degree of awareness of internal processes, paying attention to the development of relationships with co-researchers, while keeping a phenomenon in perspective is an enormous task. It is close to what the Sanskrit philosophy evokes through the word Sataavadhaana which means "the capability of being aware of one hundred things simultaneously". Obviously this level of awareness can only be attained through long training. This is what Torbert recommends: his model of action-science is close to the notion of collaborative inquiry for it is based on very similar assumptions; it considers:

> (1) that researchers are themselves active participants in the situations researched and that the researcher situation relationship deserves to be studied.
> (2) that the framework and variables of studies themselves change in the course of study; and
> (3) that an important way of testing the validity and significance of social knowledge is to feed data back into the setting researched studying how feedback influences action. (Torbert, 1981).

From various studies, he derived the notion that collaborative inquiry deals with "four territories of human reality and thus requires research methodologies capable of registering these four different qualities of reality." (Torbert, 1981)

These qualities are:

> (1) the outside world; (2) one's own behaviour; (3) one's own and others' thinking and feeling; and (4) the dynamics of human attention as it gains, loses, or changes focus and as it narrows or widens the number of qualities of which it is aware. (Torbert, 1981).

All social scientists realise that there are behavioural skills to effective interviewing or that good theory makes the differene between a mass of data and fruitful study. For Torbert, it isn't enough to develop skills for the sole purpose of collecting, analysing data and feeding them back into the world of social action. In his opinion the prospective action scientist should be trained in the four respective methodologies. They should be involved in self-study in action; this requires the development of a kind of attention which can continually register one's own behaviour, thought and attention dynamics. Torbert advocates the development of a culture among social scientists, in which participants could research their own lives with others, in order to improve the quality of these non instrumented research skills.

At best, the training the prospective researchers would receive, would not only include acquiring skills in empirical data collection methods but also learning from the teachings of counselling psychology, group dynamics, organisation development and clinical research methods:

> In such courses, students can be challenged to become aware of their own behavioural patterns through others' feedback, to develop more effective inquiring behaviour, and to theorize about the very activity in which they are currently (emotionally) involved in such a way as to invite further enquiry and in such a way as to expose and test their own most primitive assumptions about social life. (Torbert, 1981).

Adding to that, the student would further "his moment to moment awareness" by practising "any dance form".

These activities are difficult to find at the moment in academia and I suspect that most researchers would sneer at them. But they are necessary if the researcher is to question "how to categorize. . ." and "the value or significance of an occasion". Once we understand that knowledge is not objective, that science is not value free, then the underlying values of scientific inquiry become the central focus of our questioning. The questions we ask are just (if not more) important than the answers.

This model focuses on the exploration of a conscious action orientated type of awareness. It complements Devereux's inward orientated approach. For Devereux, validity stems from taking care of the unconscious processes which otherwise pervade the relationships between the social scientist and her work. Self-awareness is attained through making the unconscious more accessible, creative and less frightening.

While Torbert also considers the importance of this type of self exploration, he concentrates on advising the action scientists to become beter researchers by improving themselves in their relationship with the outside world. In the same way as, in the previous chapter, I explored my inner world, anxieties and blocks. I shall now reflect on the meaning of these new paradigm research criteria for my inquiry.

II Validity Criteria: A Personal Assessment

While I now understand the relevance of going through the rigorous training described by Torbert, I have not accepted it without a struggle. For a long time, these views sounded extremely elitist. I was stuck with the following dilemma: I was told that research had to do with encountering "lay" people but that it was necessary to become "pure" researchers in order to conduct valid inquiry. Only a "fully functioning person" can be "objective" says Rogers (in Rowan, 1973); in this context, the term objectivity is used as a synonym to Schwartz and Olgivy's notion of perspective. If this is so, is there a chance for any of us to undertake research in our life time, busy as we are, to develop the required skills?

I overcame my resistance, my all or nothing attitude, by reflecting on my belief that research is about developing concepts which produce better acting in the world. I realized at a very personal level that the only way I could hope to improve the world I live in was to improve myself. I now believe that I cannot change others by intellectual arguments; it's arrogant and it does not work anyway. But maybe I can reach other people's potential for change by taking responsibilities to express how I deeply experienced the research process which in turn enabled me to change and produce an alternative "doing". As with any peak experience, I am not sure that I can easily communicate the meaning of this direct form of knowing. What I am trying to express at an insight level finds a theoretical counterpart in the holistic approach to discovery developed by Diesing, which deals with studying a whole human system in its natural setting.

The holistic standpoint:

> includes the belief that human systems tend to develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity. They are not simply a loose connection of traits or wants or reflexes or variables of any sort, they have a unity that manifests itself in nearly every part ... the characteristics of a part are largely determined by the whole to which it belongs and by its particular location in the whole system. (Diesing, 1972).

This theory has wider implications for the way data analysis should be conducted, I shall come back to this later on. For the time being my response to this approach is of a different nature, it makes me think that if I am part of a wider system then if I change I can hope to affect, even in a minute way, the system I live in. I do not think that I will ever get to the point where I will consider myself as a "fully functioning" person but it is just as important to travel as to get there. What I know, is that the journey starts 'within' so if trying to know and change oneself is elitist then I accept such a label.

However if I now acknowledge the need for rigorous training and personal growth this doesn't make the new paradigm criteria any less difficult to live up to. In order to clarify this general statement I shall now reflect on my relationship with the outside world and with the people who have been involved in the inquiry at different stages of the research.

Looking back on the different stages of the research, I realise that, in the context of a Ph.D., it is difficult to follow a fully collaborative and experiential model; I am especially thinking about the contribution people make to the research. No matter how much

they have been involved in the creative thinking in this inquiry, in the end I have to acknowledge that I have always been in charge of the research; I am the one who embarked on this venture which I knew would take several years to complete. I also decided on the research topic and wrote up this thesis alone. I couldn't expect the same committment from others for a piece of work which I would submit alone. This statement even applies to the first research cycle which is the strongest in terms of collaborative research. The women who took part in the workshop challenged my most primitive assumptions about the nature of group dynamics; their contribution changed the focus of the research. However the account of this experience is my own construct, although it was presented to the women, discussed and amended when they felt uneasy about some aspects of my analysis. I had suggested that they write about their own experience of the group but didn't want to put pressure on them, so Clare's feedback was a pleasant surprise.

Whereas in the first part of the research I was concerned with setting up my inquiry on a collaborative basis, in the second stage of the research this issue became less crucial for me. The second cycle of the research is mainly the product of in-depth reflection but also of intuitive leaps. As the main theme of the thesis was taking shape, it became clear that I was getting involved in a very personal piece of research, that it was going to be unusual and above all that I wanted it to stay that way. I value this period when I had space to carry out my exploration alone; I thought that I would probably never again have the opportunity, nor the time to deal in depth with difficult and fascinating ideas concerning the nature of the feminine and masculine. I decided to make the the

most of this privileged time; for me it meant managing the research on my own. However, I do not want to give the impression that I was cut off from the rest of the world, happily drifting into my own fantasies; during supervision sessions I got support and response to my ideas but they were also challenged, enabling me to be more careful in my sense making and to put some form of order in my chaos. I also found some solid anchors in the literature and had some useful meetings with group facilitators or therapists.

When I reached the final stage of the research, I was ready to meet and share my ideas with a larger group of people. I wanted to feed them back the product of my reflections and decided to set up a workshop in order to find out whether the concepts of male and female processes made sense to others. As I was concerned with issues of validity, it felt "right" to get involved in another collaborative empirical piece of work in order to bring many more viewpoints to the research and validate the ideas I had developed on my own. Another part of me was exhausted by the research and was reluctant to engage in more empirical work. I ignored the voice who was pleading with me to stop here and start writing up. I thought it was much more important to bring some form of empirical validity to the research than to pay attention to my emotional state. I started to work on the workshop design and set off to look for participants.

In the next chapter I shall present the methodology of the workshop, its aims and the possible approaches for dealing with the data gathered during the workshop.

C H A P T E R N I N E

METHODOLOGY OF THE WORKSHOP

I Theoretical Background

Having taken into account the new paradigm research criteria for valid inquiry, I was not so much concerned, when I organized the workshop, with whether male and female processes were "true". I was more interested to see how people would make sense of these concepts. As I wanted to focus on people's experience, on their bringing new perspectives to the research, the structure of the workshop had to allow these ideas to come out freely.

Some works in the methodology of social sciences gave me some useful advice for organizing less oppressive fieldwork. I am especially thinking about what Diesing says about fieldwork design in "Patterns of discovery in the social sciences".

> It is important therefore that the design be loose enough to allow for developments in the field, too strict a design ties the research down and inhibits the changes in concepts that are characteristic of fieldwork. (Diesing, 1972)

The structure of the workshop had to be loose in order to give the participants plenty of time and space to express what was meaningful to them. However I had struggled with the notion of male/female processes long enough to think that some structure was needed. I had to give the participants a starting point to which they could refer in their exploration. Therefore I decided to start the workshop by telling them the story of my research and let the participants respond to it. The other structure I gave the workshop was to require that the participants had an awareness of group processes whether as participants or facilitators. I planned two one-day sessions with an interval of a fortnight between them. The

first one would be loosely structured, it would allow the participants to play with the model presented in my story. I wanted to hand the research over to them so that they could do whatever they wanted with it, so that it would become their own research by telling stories of their group experiences. As I have mentioned story telling several times, I shall now say with the help of theroretical reference, what this type of inquiry is and why I think it is appropriate for exploring female processes.

Story telling is a way "to work with the meaning of experience" (Hawkins and Reason, 1983). This path of inquiry complements the traditional explanatory mode of reflecting and processing experience which is based on analysis. Classifying, conceptualizing, slicing a phenomenon into manageable "bits" is useful for building a theory. It is an active way of inquiring, creating arbitrary boundaries cut out with the researcher mental "scissors", to use one of Bateson's metaphors. However we can lose sight of what matters in the science of persons when we stand back and dissect our experience. That is what has happened to mainstream experimental psychology which is overcontrolled, over analytical and produces degenerate forms of knowledge, ie. knowledge which can oppress in its attempt to consider people from the outside, by manipulating variables and producing hard data. Alternatively we can allow the meaning of experience to become manifest by expressing it. We need to "partake of experience" in order to get at its meaning:

> Meaning is part and parcel of all experience, it may be so interwoven with that experience that it is hidden: it needs to be discovered, created or made manifest and communicated. We work with the meaning of experience when we tell stories, write and act in plays, write poems, mediate, create pictures, enter psychotherapy, etc. When we partake of life we create meaning, the purpose of life is making meaning. (Hawkins and Reason, 1983).

The path of expression allows the feminine mode of experience to emerge in a way which does justice to its grounded, unified qualities. It makes sense to me to give it an important place in a workshop on male and female principles alongside the more Yang path of analysis. This approach may appear as unscientific because "creative expression is often relegated to the production of the beautiful or the entertaining." However, telling stories is part of the human experience: we use stories to convey our fears, wishes, hopes, to carry the meaning of our everyday experience.

A science of persons which respects the richness of human experience has nothing to lose by taking story telling seriously. Therefore, to use Mitroff's conclusions:

> The question then is not 'Is story telling science?' but 'Can science learn to tell good stories?' (Mitroff, 1978)

The answer is yes, if we can meet the criteria for telling good stories which are those "which stir people's minds hearts and souls and by doing so give them new insights into themselves, their problems, and their human condition" (Mitroff, 1978). I am aware that telling stories involves using language which as Spender (1980) led me to believe, is essentially based on a male view of seeing the world. Yet it is possible to be creative with language, to use it in a different mode, the language of emotions and experience being different from the language of analysis. The following example will show that it is possible to go beyond the language of explanation through story telling.

I had a first direct experience of this mode of inquiry when I

attended a story telling workshop, set up as part of our department yearly research week programme of seminars, workshop or lectures on methodology. For two days we explored this medium, writing and telling stories about varied aspects of our lives, and responding to each other. During the workshop, the stories told by the other participants not only restimulated a lot in me but I also experienced strong feelings which I could not easily translate into words in an articulate way. I felt that we had touched on something almost archetypal in our experience, that we had achieved through our stories a kind of communication not often experienced.

The other point I want to make, regarding my growing awareness of the importance of telling stories, is that some of the novels I have read while doing research have illuminated the concepts in a totally different way from the academic literature. I am not saying that I have made a conscious effort to find what novelists had to say on the male and female principles, and I am not going to engage in a discussion about the place of the novel in social sciences but I have found great comfort in Herman Hesse's "stories" which helped me to reflect on Jungian theories with greater ease.

In order to show how we inquire with stories my personal account needs to be clarified by presenting the systematic approach to ways of using stories developed by Hawkins and Reason.

Hawkins and Reason launched their exploration in several directions, through several stages of development from experience to myth and archetype "the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the roots of the soul governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the

world" (Hillman, 1975). They started recording simple aspects of their lives and played with ways of expressing meaning:

> One way of expressing meaning is to play around with who is the story teller and who is the audience and also with the variety of voices, roles and dramatic style which the story teller can adopt. (Hawkins and Reason, 1983).

They moved onto exploring the sub-plots in the story and the different mythical, analytical dimensions of the sub-stories.

These levels in the stories are not separate, they are:

> . . . interpenetrating reflections of how the present drama of the story teller's life is reflected in the drama of the story. At a communal level, we would assume that the stories told within a community reflect the processes of that community. Levels reflect levels, outside reflects inside; the individual reflects the collective, and the past reflects the present. (Hawkins and Reason, 1983).

The notion of the individual reflecting the collective was especially important to me when I was setting up the workshop because I was hoping to get stories about the participants' group experiences.

Then I had to choose among the different ways of wandering inside a story those which seemed the most appropriate to the inquiry. These ways include reliving the story by becoming a character or an object of the story and giving them a voice; dreaming the dream on, responding to a story with a story. The role of the audience, who respond in their own words to a story (re-creation) or give shape to the feeling and ideas arising while listening to it (echo), is to allow a shift towards a more collective expression of experience (reflection) which eases the move towards the mythical and archetypal.

From my experience of the two day workshop and the account of Hawkins and Reasons's inquiry I decided that I'd elicit from the participants stories which would echo and reflect group processes.

I actually wanted to use story telling in a very progressive way, starting as I said before with telling them the story of my research, expressing the themes which were important for me: leadership/facilitation; the hidden group processes. I would also explain how Jung's theories and the Tao had helped me to understand the emergence of the female process. I would ask them for responses to my story explaining that we would tell stories more systematically at a later stage in the workshop ie. working in small groups, writing stories and echoing them.

I have said several times that I wanted to give the participants enough space for them to get used to the concepts, hypotheses, to let them play with both ends of the polarity. I wanted to use a gentle mode from the start, allowing experience to come out freely. In fact, I did not expect to get stories on the essence of female processes before the second part of the workshop.

During the second session, I had also planned to use an experiential exercise which gives the male-female polarity a bodily grounding. I decided to use an exercise from Ornstein's "Psychology of Consciousness" which serves as an introduction to a chapter on the two sides of the brain and the modes of consciousness they specialize in. The left hemisphere deals with analytic, logical thinking; the right hemisphere specialises in holistic mentation i.e. in orientation in space, artistic skills, "mystical"

experiences and intuition. He goes on to say that the major mode of consciousness in our culture is verbal, intellectual and based on reason whereas a complete human consciousness involves the integration of the left type of consciousness with the intuitive right brain mode. His analysis of the complementarity of the two modes of consciousness presented in neurophysiological terms has many connections with the male-female model I have developed using Jungian theories and Taoist philosophy. Assessed in this context, the introductory exercise seemed highly satisfying and relevant to my inquiry.

This is how it goes:

> Close your eyes and attempt to sense each side of your body separately. Try to get in touch with the feelings of the left and right side, their strengths, their weaknesses.
> When you are finished ... reflect on these questions ... sense inside for the answer, then repeat the process with the next question.
> - Which side of you is more feminine?
> - Which side is more masculine?
> - Which do you consider the "dark" side of yourself?
> - Which side is the "lighter"?
> - Which is more active?
> - Which is more passive?
> - Which side is more logical?
> - Which is more intuitive?
> - Which side is the more mysterious?
> - Which side is the more artistic? (Ornstein, 1975).

After doing the exercise, I would assume that the participants were more familiar with the concepts intellectually and emotionally and would be ready to work in pairs, telling each other stories, sharing them with the rest of the group. Finally they would write a collective, even mythical version of the themes expressed earlier on in the day.

What happened during the workshop is presented in the next chapter; it was a puzzling experience; I didn't know how to present it on paper. The next partof this chapter will show how difficult it was for me to decide what to do with the data I had collected during the workshop.

II On Data

At the end of the workshop I was left with several tapes which were transcribed into many pages of script. I was frightened by this vast amount of information and I avoided looking at it. This avoidance had to do with my relationship with the participants, this theme will be developed later on in Chapter Ten, I also feared that any form of analysis would damage the stories the participants told. I toyed with the idea of leaving the script as it is, or of presenting it in the same way as the Grail and Psyche myths in Chapter Seven. But what happened during the workshop couldn't entirely be treated as stories and I also had to assess what is done to data in the social sciences.

One of the most rigorous approaches to qualitative research, widely practised by social scientists, has been developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978). Their grounded theory approach is based on the assumption that there is a unity in the social world accessible through conceptual analysis; it is grounded in experience as opposed to "a theory generated by logical deduction from a priori assumption". (1967). The researcher first chooses a particular area of study and begins by collecting information to which he/she

applies the method of 'constant comparison' (1967) in order to establish conceputual similarities and identify categories. Then the researcher guided by the demands of the emerging theory, collects more data from appropriate sources in order to saturate the concepts as far as possible and until no new categories are identified. The research is complete when the 'core categories' (1978) are drawn into a theory which:

> explains with he fewest possible concepts and greatest possible scope as much variation as possible in the behaviour and problems under study. (Glaser, 1978).

I had very little patience for a method which had just stepped out of the experimental laboratory. The authors reject the model of logical deduction from a priori assumption but they still use a deductive model in their use of data. They rely heavily on the generality of a fact and stay at a social 'objective' level of analysis. I am prepared to accept that I have misunderstood their aim because I am disturbed by the language used, by so much logic, rationality and discipline. But logic is not the only scientific method allowing discovery, in fact if it is used to the exclusion of any other approach then I wonder if it is helpful at all.

As Diesing puts it:

> The creative side of science is wild and undisciplined. (Diesing, 1972).

A method for analysing data should levae room for chaos (a favourite process of mine) and intuition.

Rediscovering Diesing's method was much more fruitful. I have already mentioned in Chapter Eight, the holistic stand-point which is based on the "belief that human systems tend to develop a characteristic wholeness of integrity". An account of these systems should "somehow capture and express this holistic quality". This approach parts from mainstream research by respecting the uniqueness of each individual:

> By 'holistic quality' is meant not only the interrelations among parts that appear in the original but also some of the unique characteristics, the distinctive qualities and patterns that differentiate this system from others. This is the point where many social scientists part company with the holist; it seems to them that an emphasis on uniqueness makes generalisations impossible, and without generalisation there can be no science. (Diesing, 1972).

How then do the holists deal with their research and their data analysis? Diesing describes the necessary preparation before doing any fieldwork; the reading of published reports about the area or related areas, talking to people who have been there, learning the language which will be used in the field and acquainting oneself with a variety of theories. Then he categorizes the activities in the field in terms of scheduled and unscheduled activities. The former involves the general routine of administering questionnaires or projective tests, of interviewing the informants. Among the unscheduled activities he stresses the importance of making oneself acceptable to the community studied in order to become part of it.

The discovery of a 'theme' among the information gathered in the field situation requires a certain quality of attention. Diesing uses Erickson's notion of "engaging in free floating attention" and Reik's "listening with the third ear" to describe this type of

attention. Once a theme is identified, it must be reinterpreted, tested and revised. The holist checks the accuracy of a theme by comparing it with others. This is what Diesing calls contextual validity:

> Contextual validity takes two main forms. First, the validity of a piece of evidence can be assessed by comparing it with other kinds of evidence on the same point. Each kind ... has its own characteristic ambiguities and shortcomings and distortions, which are unlikely to coincide with those of another kind.
> The second kind of contextual validation is to evaluate a source of evidence by collecting other kinds of evidence about that source ... to locate the characteristic pattern of distortion in a source. (Diesing, 1972)

For the holist the pattern of bias itself may be of interest. During data collection, the researcher must be aware of the amount of bias in the informant's statements but also of his/her own prejudices. He/she should also be consciously looking for evidence which contradicts their theories and hypotheses. While building a model from the data, the holist:

> tries to set up a plausible connection between themes that seem independent or whose relationship is unclear and he tries to bring into the model items that have stubbornly refused to fit. (Diesing, 1972).

This "pattern model" of explanation is built by connecting themes in a network or pattern.

The themes are discovered empirically; the result is an explanation of the system which describes the relations and interactions of the different parts in the model so that:

> the relations between that part and other parts serve to explain or interpret the meaning of that part. (Diesing, 1972).

In the case of a pattern model "one can only explain", any interpretation being questionable "in the sense that plausible alternative interpretations can be developed using much the same evidence". Another important element in this method is the acceptance of the openness of the model developed: the model is never quite completed:

> ... the pattern can be indefinitely filled in and extended: as we obtain more and more knowledge it continues to fall into place in this pattern, and the pattern itself has a place in a larger whole. (Diesing, 1972).

This method helped me to see beyond the criteria of validity I had set. It allowed me to bring new dimensions to my previous model without damaging its essence. It showed me a way to deal with data which respects the wholeness of an experience and its uniqueness.

While I basically agree that one can only explain, I am not sure that it is so easy to draw the line between explanation and interpretation in one's own sense making which is an essentially personal process. At the end of the day, I am the one who chooses how to present the themes, the links and there is already an element of interpretation in that choice.

This pattern of bias, once it has been located, also finds its place in the data analysis alongside the pattern model of explanation:

> It seems clear that one can get increased objectivity by being as subjective as possible. (Rowan, 1981).

In that respect, the methodological work that I found most encouraging and meaningful is not a theoretical one but a personal account of how a researcher manages to make sense of the data

collected. I read it often when I did not know what to do with the script or when I needed to take some distance from the advice given, at a theoretical level, on how to organize the data.

What Marshall says on bias and validity enabled me to face up to the data:

> Because my feeling of rightness is important, my feeling that this is what I can do, it's my translation, what I've found and interpreted from the data. My bias is something I appreciate, it's part of me as a researcher. And while it's important for me and for others to recognize my bias, it really is what I can give as a researcher, it is my contribution, and it's coherent and it's felt and it has all these other qualities which make me value it more than a detached attempt to be objective. (Marshall, 1981).

I am now ready to reconciliate my wish to leave the script "as it is" with the need to order and link the themes which emerged on these two days. In the next chapter I shall include large unspoilt excerpts of the script, I shall let a few of the stories told in the second day speak for themselves as much as possible ie. with minimum intervention on my part but I shall also explain the context within which the stories were told; finally I shall respond to the participants.

C H A P T E R T E N

RE-VISIONING GROUP PROCESSES: A MALE/FEMALE INQUIRY

An Account of the Workshop

Seven people decided to join the workshop after reading an introduction to the aims of the project which was worded in these terms:

> ... my research has showed me that the prevailing culture has favoured mainly one type of analysis of group processes and development. My involvement with various self-development groups (self-help groups, womens' groups) makes me suspect that the traditional analysis is not only becoming obsolete but has also ignored or distorted some fundamental processes. I am hoping to develop a holistic analysis of group structures based on the notions of male and female patterns which acknowledges the importance of "doing", of getting work done in the group, but which also takes into account female creativity in dealing with human relationships within the group ... participants will be invited to share and explore their group experiences and will have the opportunity to use, contribute ideas to, and challenge the theoretical model briefly described above. Activities will include story telling, group discussions...

I had wished for an equal number of male and female participants. After several attempts at getting a group together for a few evening sessions or during a week-end in order to get a variety of people I had to admit that more women than men were interested in the project. The participants also expressed a preference for the sessions to happen on a week day. Among the five women who joined, four of them were humanistic psychology practitioners and group facilitators. All of them had an experience of a peer support group of some kind.

Susan and Marian were involved in a supervision group with two other facilitators. Jane was also in a supervision group and a member of a women's group. Linda had made an attempt at setting up a self-help therapy group. Joan, the only one who was not a facilitator was a member of the same women's group as Jane.

As for the men, Paul had been in a men's group and was committed to a peace group. Simon was helping to run a housing co-operative.

The day started with a quick round of introductions and the sharing of expectations about the day. They had none. I then took some time to talk about my research to clarify and develop the ideas mentioned on the invitation. I explained that I was initially interested in self-help groups specially in those where people are prepared to be in charge of their own growth and development and are willing to develop alternatives to the prevailing cultural norms. I told them why I decided to set up a self-help therapy group. I needed to understand what was actually happening in a group where the self-development purpose dominated, since the literature was helpful on typologies but did not really offer a clear picture of what was happening in them. I expressed my fear of being seen as a leader by the other women and how they accepted my contribution to the group in a positive manner rather than challenging it. I introduced the notions of "being" and "doing", the Yin and Yang polarity and the concepts of animus, anima and said how they helped me to re-vision processes, to see the hidden picture in the traditional views on groups. I made clear that I was not rejecting the traditional approach, that I was just building around it to make it whole. I was hoping that the story of my research would provide them with a starting point for identifying male and female phases in their groups and telling stories about them.

I did not want to intervene much during the workshop, I was afraid of influencing the participants or making them say what I wanted to hear. I did not want the workshop to change into a collective

interview and saw myself as a convenor not as a leader. This "non directive" attitude, as Jane later called it, influenced the atmosphere of the first day in an unexpected way.

I had not deliberately planned to leave the session open in order to provoke some interesting reactions. I had just thought, from my past experience as a member of a self-help group (see Chapter 3) that the present group would cope well with a loose structure, that it would protect the female principle.

However there is a darker side to my non directiveness. Several months have passed since the workshop and I am still wondering whether I wanted it to take place. In the first place, I had the feeling that there was little to expect from a short term group experience compared to a two year one. I valued the experience of our self-help group so much that I didn't think the workshop could match up to it.

I also thought, at a rational level that I <u>should</u> set up a workshop to test and get feedback on my ideas and agreed with my supervisors that I needed to do more empirical work in order to meet criteria of validity I have presented in the previous chapters. However, at the time of organizing the workshop I was mentally exhausted. During the second cycle of the research, I had experienced a learning shift and the whole range of emotions which accompany such a shift: confusion, stress, excitement. After learning so much, I felt too tired to take in much new information and to get into another piece of work. In other words I was ready to complete the Ph.D. I felt that the workshop was getting in the way of more important issues

issues such as writing up the present thesis. I knew that writing would'nt be easy; from this point of view, the workshop was delaying me in getting to grips with putting my ideas on paper, with fighting my writer's blocks.

My supervisors had to give me a great deal of advice on how to organize the workshop and where to find potential participants. They were met, on my side by passive resistance and many "Yes, buts". It took quite a few sessions before I put some energy into finding participants and did some serious thinking about the workshop format.

Therefore my unstructured style was an expression of my way of dealing with a group and/or a retreat into a soothing indifference towards what was going to take place in order to save my energy for writing.

In this context, it is just as relevant to study the dynamics within the group and how the participants coped with a loose structure as to give a detailed account of their recalled experience, and this is what the following report will do. At one level I have analysed the processes of the "here and now" group using the model and ideas developed in the previous cycle of research, at another level I am reporting their past experience.

I have treated the two sessions of the workshop differently: I have concentrated on presenting a detailed report on the first day which had highly disturbed me, while I have used some of the stories told on the second day to illustrate and support a few aspects of my sense making.

I Praising Conflicts and Power

The female participants responded to my story and to the loose structures with what I considered for a long time, to be tearing my ideas to pieces. Then reading the script many times helped me to understand that they were not necessarily rejecting the model but that my story had triggered some anxiety in them, especially in Linda who, at the beginning of the workshop was almost in tears for my story had brought back bad memories of her attempt at setting up a SHG.

Though I am quite sure that Joan was only interested in fighting me. I wondered what had made her come to the workshop. For a start, she demanded that the meeting started, as we were waiting for two women who were late, and threatened to leave since she was "very busy". She did not talk much during the session and when she did, it was usually to disagree with me. I was faced with a few energetic women who plunged into the model offered by criticizing any form of self-help initiated by an expert. In the first phase of the workshop, the participants were concerned with the notion of leadership, conflict and power.

Linda recounted her attempt at setting up a SHG:

> From a very socialistic point of view, I did not want to change people so the only way to be a member of a SHG was to be a peer member, I did that, it worked up to a point until ... they hadn't separated things that came from Linda, me, to share and find out and explore from the therapist and I got my fingers chopped in the end very painfully by one person in particular who threw all her aggression at me and could not stop, she could not separate me at all and I don't know what went on there; I did try to be a peer member but everytime I opened my mouth they thought "she must know what she is talking about" they didn't see the human being.

Susan then explained the difficulty of being clear about the concept of SHG because as they are facilitators people were bound to look at them for guidance:

> Quite often a therapist sets up a SHG and says I'll leave or I won't change you. There is one person with the experience and the other is naive that's the difference... We have a SHG, a supervision group, we are four people who have roughly the same experience, everybody is equal, no one is the leader, no one has been. Because not one of us has set it up not one of us knows more than the other. I think that's the trouble with a lot of them.

From now on the group split into the "idealists" - Paul and Susan - and the women who hung on to celebrating the importance of traditional processes (Simon had a totally different role in the group, I shall refer to this later on). Jane especially seemed quite sceptical when she responded to Susan's account:

> I'm in a SHG group, a supervision group too, but I still experience feelings: feeling criticized, feeling that somebody is taking more power than they should, those negative things in spite of the fact that it was set up non hierarchically which related to my past experience and myself as a person.

When Paul evoked different aspects of leadership, Jane reacted again:

> Isn't what you're talking about an ideal, that one might come to eventually? As we are, it's very difficult for a group to get together and do that because we're not all evolved.

I used Jane's comment to call these two people "idealists" as it rendered best the way they were perceived by the other participants at the time. Indeed by describing notions of leadership based on knowledge or on emotional competence Paul was already getting a step beyond the usual views of leadership based on power.

He started to evoke his alternative conception of leadership by talking about an experiment among computer programmers in the USA who were working in peer-groups. This was of special interest to him as he is a computer programmer:

> People in America are exploring with the style of computer programming which instead of having a team of programmers where you have a wizzard or head who does all the interesting research . . . you have a peer group of programmers who as the job reaches different phases different people naturally reach to the fore as they've addressed the problem because that's where their talents are so as the problems the group faces are changing so the pattern of who is directing the meeting with the consensus of the group changes dynamically, it can happen even within a meeting when the discussion changes.

From intellectual leadership he moved to emotional leadership by explaining how different people took responsibility for providing gentle support in his men's group:

> ... with different topics coming out, different men confident with the other people's stuff, if somebody gets very scared you have to have somebody to take responsibility to make sure the group meeting didn't break up, to make sure that the group was continuing to be gentle to its members, help their feelings and it worked because different people were able to function as evolved human beings at different times depending on what was talked about.

For him the fighting around the concept of leadership has to do with "resisting an external imposed identity", of rejecting a culture, a literature which reflects a hierarchical model with a nominated leader. He concluded by saying "there are mens' groups who don't go through the fighting of the leader stage."

But Jane didn't want leadership to be discarded that easily:

> It might be beneficial for a group to go through a phase of fighting the leader . . . we can't throw out the idea of leadership . . . Linda could have done with somebody there who could have taken some leadership . . . in our women's group, we've found that when conflict comes into the situation that very often it's the most interesting creative thing.

This last comment sparked off Linda and Joan's enthusiasm and they broke into a chorus. Reading this part of the script several times it felt as if they were almost chanting the importance of conflict, power and leadership:

Joan: When things go smoothly, there is a lack of energy.
Linda: Conflict is necessary to move on, otherwise it's a smoothing over.
Joan: A covering up rather than opening up.
Linda: Whereas if everybody is too nice ... there's something wrong.

Marian who had said little up till that moment brought the participants to focus on the leadership rotation suggesting a possible sharing of power.

> In our supervision group, from time to time one of us is taking the lead, it changes during a session too. I don't know if anyone of us leads for very long.

Once again Jane's experience of the process was firmly grounded in the orthodox model of explanation. She used the vocabulary of avoidance and compromise in her next contribution to the discussion:

> One thing we do is to rotate the leadership, we <u>avoid</u> the leadership issue by doing that . . . we always used to lead in pairs . . . we <u>compromised</u> about what we were going to do, we would <u>water down</u> our ideas in order to fit with the other's ideas. (my emphasis).

Her experience, seen in these terms, contradicted Paul's views of a leadership rotation which enabled the sharing of responsibilities towards the functioning of the group. He was consequently asked whether they had deliberately decided to rotate the leadership. His answer was interesting in the sense that "it didn't happen formally" due to the fact that they "didn't know enough about groups". This lack of knowledge made them commit a few mistakes such as "not

establishing a consensus about what the goals of the group were" but also left them open, rather than defensive, to experimenting with processes, to let them happen.

At that time, I was a bit confused as to what was happening in the here and now group. I was aware that two opposed perspectives were brought in response to my presentation of my inquiry but I was also slightly resentful that so much emphasis should be put on the traditional model. I was starting to wonder whether most of the women had actually heard what I'd said, and whether any expression of the female principle would be acknowledged by the group. Interestingly enough, it was Simon who helped the voice of Yin to be heard by being extremely rational in his assessment of group development. Up till now he had not shared any personal experiences with the others. He had seemed to put his energy into summarizing and generalizing what was being said. His contributions to the discussion would often start by impersonal statements such as "It's important" or "It's necessary". When Paul mentioned that his group did not have any goal to start with, Simon said:

> It's necessary to define the aims of the group otherwise there is no direction, it becomes an incoherent, amorphous sort of thing . . . to use a sailing terminology you have to have a steerageway, you have to be going somewhere before you have any control over where you're going.

He had pushed the logical argument to its limits. Susan annoyed by his "expansion of a very Yang concept" decided to tell the story of her dream group. It was a turning point in the workshop development. From then on the power orientated women and the idealists became more capable of dialoguing with each other. The next section in this chapter starts with the excerpt of the dialogue between Susan and Simon which brought new development to the workshop.

II The Voices of Chaos and Rationality

Susan: It's a very Yang concept you expanded: for a group to live it has to have a purpose, it has to have a steerageway ...

Simon: Can you tell me in that, because I'm not really aware, is there a Yin equivalent?

Susan: You would have to have a group . . ., that's interesting to see how much shape you can do away with, how much chaos you can stand before the whole thing completely disintegrates . . . I heard you say goals within 6 months or a year. You can set up an open-ended group that is for the exploration of the self and that's it, which is fairly chaotic, and explore how much everybody can tolerate that. A lot of people don't know how to live in that sort of chaos at all but it's very useful.
I did that a little bit with a dream group that I ran. It was a dream group so it had that shape but I told them nothing about what to expect and how I was going to run it. I left the whole shape to develop out of it.
It was very interesting. The first term, we were all women in the group and a shape slowly evolved and things started to happen and they were comfortable with that. On the second term, we invited men in, and all hell was let loose, they could not stand it at all, they left after about 3 sessions. They said "It's strong and it's weak, it hasn't got enough shape and things are happening but nothing is happening." What I saw is that they found it very hard to deal with this slightly amorphous character of it. Women found it easy.

It was the first time that loose structures and the emergence of shape out of chaos were depicted with great detail. My first reaction to this story was one of naive relief "Great, that's what I needed, this fits beautifully with what I'd been writing, and validates the female principle". I wasn't far from considering this story as ... the "proof" I needed. But I wasn't any the less attentive to what was happening in the group as I was curious to see how this experience would be received by the others. The participants weren't contesting Susan's analysis of the development

of the dream group. They were trying to make sense of it by considering each aspect of it. Simon delved into his past in order to find the reasons why he found this type of experience difficult to tolerate:

> I found recently that my education hasn't directed towards allowing me to maintain myself in those kind of situations with a great degree of efficiency. In a completely amorphous situation, my first response is to isolate myself because I can't depend on anything or anybody else. So I just keep myself to myself. It isn't necessarily objectively the best thing to do, but it's all I can do. I believe it to be the most efficient, efficient . . . those may be very rational words.

The participants were now looking at the actual meaning of their experience instead of using it to contradict somebody else's. Jane confessed to being much more Yang than Yin in operating in her life and Linda added "I've got tremendous

problems with being Yin" which was followed by Susan's remark:

> We're trained to be Yang, we all go to the same school, it's very patriarchal. I explore it in my own life. How much is anyone able to face a problem by sitting and becoming still and allowing anything to come in rather than immediately making lists.

Then they started exploring the concept of chaos, shape and structure with the rest of the group. At times, the group was divided again.

Paul echoed the dream group's experience by giving more information on his men's group which was goalless and directionless in order to develop alternatives to rigid ways of behaving in groups:

> We didn't know each other, we made lists individually of what we wanted, why we joined, what we expected but we deliberately didn't choose any group goal because we thought we didn't know each other enough to arrive at that without doing the rigid conventional voting or conflicting: we didn't know how to handle that.

> What happened is that meetings developed, we talked about what we wanted and themes became clearer from what we were talking about, we had things in common for example we didn't like the lack of physical contact between men, in fact we were scared of talking to each other about what we were talking about, so we were working on that, so it was a goalless group but never explicitly acknowledged , we did develop directions but the group as a whole had no direction.

Simon tried to understand the idea of a directionless group which allowed Joan to introduce the idea that the quality of the relationship among the participants were important in that case:

Simon: It's difficult, if not impossible to imagine a group without direction.

Joan: Unless the people like each other so that the relationships let it happen, if people enjoy meeting each other, it does not matter what the goals are.

The participants felt that the notion of letting the shape develop, letting it happen was important. Marian linked these concepts to a more traditional assessment of her experience, when she set up a "leaderless" group which failed because everybody was craving for a leader to take charge of the group.

> I set up a sort of encounter group, it was very open. 10 people joined. I explained that it was going to be leaderless, asked everybody for their expectations and just sat and left it at that. I explained that I was here as a peer to learn in a group. It didn't last long, one session of people taking the lead from time to time, playing games, there was physical contact, there was a lot of energy but it all ended up in everybody expressing their resentment about me not leading, that's how it ended at one in the morning. At the end, we decided to meet the next week, 5 people turned up, we continued; encounter was a very loose term like a dream group, it was just a name, it wasn't meant to be set up as anything, it continued in a couple's counselling for about three months, so it made its own shape but most people had left, they couldn't cope with it ... I found it full of learning and I was very upset and a total failure and in the end I found that it was a very good experience for everybody.

Simon summarized the story and possibly the atmosphere in the 'here and now' group by saying:

> It seems to me that we set up a Yin group and aren't happy until we've made it Yang.

His comment was a starting point for the exploration of structure, and more precisely, what type of structure was needed to let the Yin processes emerge:

Susan: If you're going to set up a Yin group, you've got to consider what that means in the same way, as when you set up a structure within which the Yang struggles can come out. You set up a different structure, you actually do that so that the space is different, so how people act and react to each other is likely to be different. It gives them room to explore this thing or the other which is what one is doing in a group.

From avoiding structures, in Paul's case, the accent was now put on their conscious establishments. But in both cases these different processes were chosen in order to protect the space needed for the emergence of a non rigid form. Jane who had been quiet for a while decided to challenge the assumption that she thought the group had made about Yin and Yang processes.

Jane: Isn't there a tendency for us to feel that Yin is good because we have less of it in our society, that Yang is bad. Maybe what really we're trying for is a balance and maybe that's what your group had more.

Her statement reminded me of the false promises of the concept of androgyny. She was assuming a balance was possible in a society which didn't leave much space for the experience of Yin. Susan expressed reservations similar to mine:

Susan: A lot of people need the experience of Yin, because they don't know what it is. I didn't know what it was. There are plenty of Yang experiences in our society and we need an awful lot of learning about how to act any other way and then the balance will

> happen. I've got endless times when I've been structured and followed leaders or tried to be the leader. Most of my life has been taken up in situations like that: I'm not saying that one is better, I'm saying that one is lacking.

Those who had fought for the value of power and conflict to be acknowledged were now defending balance. The dialogue which took place ended up in a second chorus:

Linda: We are talking about balance, there is balance, there has to be.

Jane: Your group had that sort of balance, because it was dream group, it had that kind of anchor, it had you being solid there rather than absent.

Susan: Maybe I see all groups in the same way, it's acknowledged that there is an artificial structure that you set up because you want it in a certain way which allows certain situations to develop more easily than others, that's all one can do.

Chorus:
Jane: You also provide things like the time and space those are providing some kind of structures.
Joan: You're providing quite a bit of structure.
Linda: A tremendous amount.
Jane: There you are every week sitting there, and by being present . . .
Joan: Yes by being present, you are providing a lot.

While assessing the difference of opinions and reconciling them Susan expressed the belief in ways of being Yin:

> I don't think that detracts from what is happening in the group. You're suggesting that there is the Yang structure within which the Yin is existing and I'm saying somehow you can set up a structure within which people are safe and within that they can experience something . . . it's like a room, the group is like a room, I set up a particular room in a particular way to make it easier for experiment with certain ways of being and relating.

In their own ways they come to the conclusion that certain structures favoured the emergence of the female process:

Joan: What we're saying is that without Yang structures being set up, it would have been impossible to explore.

Susan: It's possible to explore the Yin and forget about the set up once it's arranged.

Joan: We take it for granted, we know it's there.

Susan: But that's safety.

Susan's story had allowed the participants to find a framework within which a conflict of experience was expressed and integrated without resorting to discussing or belittling the concepts by calling them idealistic.

The dream group seemed to be the only focus of interest for the members. They ignored Marian's contribution and never responded much to Paul's accounts. But his influence on the group development couldn't be underestimated. While Susan was facilitating the understanding of Yin process, Paul was supporting and protecting it. He was staying in Susan's shadow, initiating new discussions which Susan was then developing. At this stage, he was interested in differentiating leadership and facilitation which hadn't been considered by the rest of the group.

This is how he assessed the differences:

> A facilitator is somebody fairly unobstrusive, who lets the group do what it wants to do, making sure the resources are there, as opposed to directing a group towards some goal. The facilitator can act in a very Yang manner to make the space to make sure the room is warm . . . But there is discontinuity as soon as the session starts, then the facilitator doesn't have any more power than anybody else, they have a role in that meeting to draw the attention of the group to things they might be missing about the way it's going to try to disinterest themselves from the issue to help itself alone. You can have a leader who is separate from a facilitator, the leader comes up because

> they have an experience with an issue, they can lead a discussion because they have the facts, like in a politically active group, if you have been out getting facts, you're going to make a report, you're leading but you're not responsible for making sure it starts, stops on time or for watching the tone of the meeting.

He had already introduced these notions in the first part of the workshop. But this time he was more precise on which activity belonged to the leader or to the facilitator. Leadership in the type of groups he knows is owned by the person who has some useful knowledge to share with the others. Whereas a facilitator is responsible for watching the emotional tone of the meeting. Susan added a new element to his analysis. She discussed the personality of the leader as having an influence on whether the group would be likely to go through a Yin or Yang experience:

> A lot of group leaders use a lot of charisma and the whole group revolves around them. I think of a group I did, the whole thing was extremely structured and told us very firmly not to look into his eyes. He told us "if you look into my eyes, you learn about me; then if you don't you learn about yourself". Although he structured the group very specifically he kept his personality out of it, so you couldn't interact with him, that was a very different, interesting approach from a person who has an unstructured group and yet it's their personality, their interaction with you which is affecting what's going on. I learned an incredible amount. Because the leader took himself away you found yourself on your own,you related less to one another. It was different from a conventional growth group and yet it's very effective. There wasn't much interaction between members of the group, we were in a group we spent a lot of time on our own. Yet it was important that we were a group, there was that energy.

Simon in his "story so far" mood summarised her point by saying "To set up a meeting is like creating a space where things can happen."

III Getting Together With Symbols

At this stage I had already suggested that the group split into smaller groups in order to work with stories more thoroughly. Linda categorically refused to write a story and Jane decided that they were already doing it in a "haphazard sort of way". Since some of them were not very clear about the Yin and Yang aspects of group processes, they decided to draw symbols representing how they viewed each principle. I relaxed a bit and was happy to let the group take its own direction. The symbols were drawn on a blackboard so there was a lot of energy in the group as people were getting up to refine a symbol or to add their own and engaged in a heated discussion on the meaning of the symbols.

They drew a vessel to represent grounding, a cat, water, a cave for Yin; a sword, a bull, a castle for Yang. They reflected on the creative dimensions of Yin and tried to get away from the notion of passivity, which was at first associated with the female principle. This took place when they were assessing the symbolism of water.

Paul expressed something about Yin power:

Paul: I thought water was harmony.

Marian: There is a difference between passive and still, you can have a positive stillness.

Paul: There's that story: if you put your hand in a bucket of water, the water gets out of the way, you take your hand out and there's no sign it's ever been there, no matter how often you do it, the water is going to come back which is the strongest?

Then a familiar dialogue took place when they considered the

symbolism of cave versus castle:

Simon: A castle in a sense is like a cave in the sense that they are enclosing structures but a castle to me is definitely Yang whereas a cave is definitely Yin. . . A castle is intended to protect and provide a rigid or defensive structure. A cave is just something that exists. A castle is deliberately built, nobody builds a cave.

Susan: I see notions of activity and passivity creeping in again.

Simon: Isn't that a good thing?

Susan: Not to me, I don't agree that the female and Yin are passive . . . you're saying that it's Yang to be active and thoughtful and constructive. I don't understand what you're saying . . .

Simon: I'm not saying that Yin can't be creative, but it doesn't go about creativity in the same way. One symbol for creative Yin is wind, it's like an environment, an all pervading influence. I see it as an atmosphere.

Paul took the exploration back to the level of experience by finding an example of Yin activity in the peace campaign:

> I think a Yin activity is the Greenham Common peace campaign. They're effective just by being there. People realize that in this country not everybody consents to a patriarchal violent society.

The participants and especially those who had seemed to value structure and leadership so much were willing to re-vise certain aspects of the female principle:

Jane: I see Yin as a vessel, yielding, allowing of chaos, not so much need for structure.

Marian: It seems very easy to describe the Yang qualities. When you try to describe the Yin there isn't any language.

Susan: It's got to do with the male control of the language. Western societies value Yang. We can't think of positive ways to describe Yin.

Jane: Let's take an example, take education. My son does a lot of day dreaming and it's seen as negative at

school whereas I see it as a positive quality, it's very necessary, but because it doesn't produce anything it's seen as negative. . . that's probably a Yin/Yang thing: letting learn and teaching.

The notion of Yang language made them realize the point of telling stories:

Paul: We can't describe Yin and Yang using words, all you can do is say these things are Yin or Yang and try to achieve an intuitive feeling; words can illustrate Yin and Yang, they can never define it.

Jane: You can go sideways ... you can use stories.

As the day was ending, the group had achieved some sense of identity which was reflected by a "them and us" type of conversation. They commented on why some people they knew were invited to the workshop didn't come. They ended up generalizing about men and women:

Linda: I was surprised to see only two men in the group.

Susan: It's interesting to see that men find it harder to give a day during the week. They feel they can't afford it.

Linda: It can be a dangerous generalization.

Marian: We can structure our time easier. Maybe men don't come because this doesn't produce anything.

Linda: I have the idea that maybe men don't want to know. There is a part of them who want to know, but they don't regard it as very important. To me it's very important this sort of issue, to me it's tied with all sorts of issues.

Marian: I mentioned it to people, to some men who were in groups, they found it fascinating, I talked to some men who were running groups and they weren't interested at all.

Paul: Men don't want to be challenged. I talked to people who were doing co-counselling, who thought co-counselling was the way . . . and I think men latch onto something as being the right solution they don't want to give time to look at anything else.

Marian: When we've been in a group on femininity and masculinity, it's the men who've been frivolous and the women who've been serious always,it's just a balance.

Joan: (using her favourite phrase) I think it's a cover up.

Jane: I feel more comfortable to be in a minority, there's something glorious about it. In a way, it's easier to be a woman in a group.

There was a lot of enthusiasm for this type of discussion. I wonder whether it wasn't what they expected to do during the workshop rather than considering group processes and principles. They had said at the beginning of the session that they didn't have any expectations. I suspected that they had some preconceptions about the day, Marian admitted to seeing the workshop as "a man and woman group", she thought there would be half and half and that we would study the dynamics of the two groups. Since most of them were group facilitators they may have been used to certain type of groups to which the workshop didn't conform. In my case, I was clear that I wanted an inquiry group not a growth group. I wanted them to explore the concepts in their own way but I didn't expect them to "work on" the stories at a cathartic level. For example some participants would have liked me to include trust games in the workshop design which I thought were unnecessary rituals in the context of my inquiry. They were obviously disturbed by the loose structure, by my non directiveness to which they were less used. In the context of what Marian said "I was aware that I was holding my Yang down" I understood better what happened during the main break of the day. At lunchtime the women talked "shop" with forceful fervour. I was very surprised by this, as my own pre-conceptions hadn't prepared me to think that women were into such extreme

businesslike ways. I also saw some attempt at compensating for a process which became less and less appropriate in the group. Put in simple terms, as the accent was put on Yin processes in the group they were making up for it by being Yang outside the group.

IV Feedback

The shape the group took had puzzled some of the women especially Joan who couldn't see that the workshop was just as structured as Susan's dream group:

> We could have sat and waited for Elisabeth to start the meeting, it started of its own energy.

I was angry but didn't say so, I didn't want to start to justify myself. But I asked myself "if the story of my research wasn't a starting point then what was it?" She had insisted on proving to Susan that her group had a tremendous amount of structure by just being there and providing a theme to explore. The feedback Susan gave about the day was:

> Susan: I meant to comment that what was so interesting was the way that something happened that was quite spontaneous, we got into this discussion without any structure, in fact it has been quite valuable and had allowed what was to be shared to come up quite spontaneously. I didn't realize there was to be a discussion. (The workshop invitation mentioned that there would be group discussions).

But she found the experience valuable, she saw the similarities between the workshop and her dream group. She re-considered the analysis of the dream group in a very similar way to what I had written at the end of the chapter on our group. She was considering

whether she could have described her experience in a more traditional model:

> I was thinking of all the discussion about my structure because I've been in the position of upholding a Yin unstructured group. I was aware that I could have described my dream group in another way and said that it was structured.

What was interesting is that she chose to assess her experience in terms of balance between structure and space.

At the end of the feedback, I thought I heard people say that they had learned something during the day but now needed some space to think about processes. Some participants gave themselves an assignment, like Simon who decided to look for a piece of music or a picture which would illustrate Yin and Yang ways or Paul who wanted to find Yin stories. Others were planning on telling more mythical stories on groups.

Such an energetic end to the day reassured me that after all something had happened during this first session. What struck me is that they had partly ignored my experience but had somehow rediscovered some elements for themselves in their own words.

B Response to the Participants

Another few months have passed since I wrote about the workshop. So far, I've only put the different themes together and ended up with a report which doesn't quite capture the whole of this puzzling experience.

Now that I've had some time to let it "simmer", I can reflect more in depth on what happened. Instead of treating the workshop as an event which provided me with data, I think I need to consider it as an echo, as many stories which are thrown back at me as echoes of the whole world.

Instead of analysing the themes, putting them together I need to take care of the frustrations I experienced during my attempt at presenting the data. I need to reply to the participants, (because I couldn't do that at the time), to respond to their stories in different ways: saying what they evoked in me but also telling my own stories.

I What have you got to lose?

This is my first response to the women who have resisted the theoretical model strongly. It is spontaneous, not very articulate; it comes from the voice who up to now, has repressed its anger at the women's reactions to my research:

I gave you Yin
You gave me Yang
I gave you intuition, feeling
Co-operation
I told you the story of the power from within
IT'S A COVER UP you cried

I am asking you
Why were you upset
Why were you threatened
What have you got to lose?

II The place of the Shadow

After the workshop I reflected on the ideas I had developed during my inquiry. I sensed that something happened then which belonged to the realm of the shadow.

In Jung's view:

> The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly - for instance traits of character and other incompatible tendencies. (Jung, 1959)

The shadow represents our own unrealized potential, its effects can be negative as well as positive if it is confronted.

In the context of my research, an encounter with the shadow means considering what I do not like about groups; this could point to aspects of myself I don't like or refuse to acknowledge. Since my theory sounded too "nice" to most participants, was it the sign that I had researched into female processes in order to protect myself against less acceptable aspects of groups?

In other words, had I built up a theory in order to defend myself against my shadow? The questions I was asking myself left me panic stricken. It wasn't helpful to realize that I didn't like those group situations which favour the emergence of power struggles or loss of individuality. The workshop had confused me to the extent that I had forgotten that it is my present theoretical model I had resisted and struggled with. My own process of re-vision had been slow but had gradually enabled me to give myself some room for space and stillness which I had denied myself up to now.

When I was a psychology undergraduate, besides attending lectures, I had a demanding part-time job and was also going to evening english classes.

I was too busy, I was always exhausted, always ignoring some vague feeling of resentment against this frantic pace. I fitted Johnson's description of the women he knows:

> Almost every woman I know is too busy. She is into this, studying that, driving in a car pool to this and to that, working hard on some big project, racing around until she is ragged. She needs to be quiet, to approach the vastness of life's responsibilities in a more orderly manner, to do one thing, take one crystal goblet at a time, concentrate on it and do it well. Then she may move onto other things. (Johnson, 1977)

My inquiry had upset my views on how I should behave in the world.

It took me several months, to befriend the Medusa way, to use Whitmont's term (1983) (see Chapter Seven). I started to allow myself to experience chaos, to retreat into myself; I could even tolerate the depression and emptiness which often preceded the

emergence of new ideas without immediately feeling that I had to pull myself together and get going at all cost.

In my loosely structured approach, in what I was saying I presented this face of the female process to the workshop participants. I start suspecting that these forceful women who had found their stength in the Pallas Athena way, felt threatened by the Medusa way. They seemed to find it unacceptable and punished me with their wrath and shadowy reactions. Whilst these ideas were developing, I came across the mythological story of Medusa. I discovered that in the myth too, Medusa offended Athena who punished her by changing her hair into snakes and by making her face so ugly that whoever looked at her was turned into stone (Graves, 1955).

I am grateful to these women, to those who have adopted the Athena way to fight for their rights to those who have struggled to survive in a male world in order to be able to relate to men on equal terms. They opened the way for me to research into other aspects of the Feminine. However, I find it painful that they are not prepared to listen to me.

III Men, women: distortions, grief, anger

I have noticed that everytime people ask me to tell them what I'm researching into, the main themes of my inquiry get distorted very quickly. The discussion usually degenerates into remonstrations against men and women. Men express their anger with the manipulative "pseudo liberated" women they know. Women complain bitterly about how neurotic or ruthless men really are. These

conversations can often become challenging once all these destructive or irrational emotions are let out, once people have liberated themselves from their "emotional plague" (Reich, 1972); however, they bear little connection with what I was talking about in the first place.

In these situations I often have the impression that people are talking through me to somebody else, to real or imaginery men and women whom I have somehow conjured up. In the same way, what was said during the workshop seemed, at times, to be aimed at somebody else. The atmosphere felt sometimes unreal, as if I was watching a play about the perennial problems between men and women, addressed to a wider audience than myself. I understood better what had been going on when, towards the end of the first session, some participants admitted to having some expectations about the whole day. They thought the workshop would be about men and women; this acknowledgement made me realise that their responses had been steeped in emotions stemming from the issues of relationships between men and women.

The idea that the subject of men and women clouded the issue of male and female processes and phases in groups, found more grounding in the second session of the workshop. On this second day, the atmosphere was more peaceful: after experimenting with the first "warming up" exercise, the participants agreed to explore story telling in a more systematic way, including Linda, who had previously refused to write anything.

However the stories told then were about men and women's

relationships in groups not about phases of development. The energy of the group was directed towards exploring this issue, I did nothing to change its focus; I didn't want to explain again what my field of study was: there is only so much you can explain before falling into the trap of justifications and rationalizations. In the previous session I'd had some support for my ideas from Susan and Paul; their support gave me enough strength to accept that my long and personal theory building process didn't have to make sense straight away to the other participants. I let the group members concentrate on expressing their despair and anger with the difficulty to relate with the opposite sex.

Linda's and Jane's stories reflect best the themes evoked during this second session.

JANE

My story concerns co-leading a group with a man, my husband. Our working together is often difficult in that we tend to polarise. He becomes didactic, and controlling and I become almost invisible. When we lead separately from each other we are usually more balanced in that he is more receptive and I, more able to appropriately take charge and be present.

On one particular occasion we were leading a training group for counsellors. This process began to take hold on the second day. He was particularly eloquent and I began to feel that I was cast adrift on a sea with no possibility of reaching land. My body felt cold

and alienated. I was dizzy and disorientated. Then just as I felt that I had sunk without trace a voice within me urged me to feel my power. Then my body took over and I stood up and walked across the room. Suddenly I was present. I could feel my body again and I was able to contribute. He was able to listen and be receptive.

LINDA'S STORY

This weekend I ran a group which had six participants and me, three men and three women. It seemed to me that at the end of the two days the women were saying that they would have prefered a woman's group and were quite critical and contemptuous of the males in the group. One of the males, a guy called Stuart, pissed off the females in the group including me. Stuart was a maths teacher, I believe, and it was interesting to note that he came on the Saturday and observed the group as well as struggled for power, particularly I felt over me, he did not succeed and he chose not to return to the group on the Sunday. I hasten to say that I worked on him to participate rather than observe. He made a judgement on my work with another female and I fear he rather missed the point of what was happening that day. He failed to understand the difference between his head and his heart. His outward behaviour intimitated us, again the females expressed their intimitation with him far more than the males.

Recently in my groups I am now aware there has <u>always</u> been at least one male who will refuse to understand what I am trying to convey to them. The conclusion, I am coming to is that unaware males can only

intellectualize their experiences in a group sometimes it seems as though they are so afraid of their feelings or so screwed up that they cannot move from the prison of their minds.

I realize that I may sound pretty angry about what I have written and yet I feel frustrated at not knowing how to communicate to someone who refuses to be contacted.

C H A P T E R E L E V E N

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

It is time for me to bring some conclusions to this piece of work. I have been to many places, I need to pause, to reflect on this journey and find some ways of expressing what the female process is.

My first reaction to such presentation is to say: I have already told it all; each piece of literature I have reviewed, each quotation I have chosen evokes aspects of the female process. In a way I would like the readers to draw their own conclusions from the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle I have created all through my research. Underlying this reaction is the fear that the female process is ineffable, that I do not know the words to express its manifestation. In the past, there have been times when I felt I knew what it meant, but this type of knowing belongs more to the realm of peak, mystical experiences than to the field of articulate analytical ideas.

The issue for me here is not so much to overcome the resistance to write up my conclusions but rather to find a way of approaching female processes which will not damage them. In other words, I do not wish to make any type of grand statement of the kind which is often found in academic literature in order to finish elegantly a piece of research. I think this is inappropriate for dealing with female processes; the language used for making such statements cannot capture their essence. Furthermore the reemergence of the Feminine as a cultural determinant is too recent to present its aspects with great uncertainty.

However by analysing my reluctance to treat female processes in certain ways, I seem to have found how to deal with them: gently,

using a multiplicity of approaches, drawing from the resources gained at an empirical, theoretical and experiential level throughout my research, with the awareness that language can be inadequate, spinning fantasies and stressing the creative possibilities of the female process.

My first approach will be to differentiate female processes from male ones. If I cannot easily say what they are, at least I can say what they are not.

In this chapter I shall be concerned with expressions of female processes: I learned from my study of Jungian literature that female qualities are not solely owned by women, consequently I do not believe that female processes only manifest themselves in groups where all participants are women.

I Differentiation

I shall here summarise the main themes of the 'traditional' literature I have surveyed in Chapter 4, in order to contrast male and female processes.

In Bennis and SheparD (1961), Bion (1961), Srivastva (1978), and to a certain extent in Randall and Southgate (1980), group development is evaluated in terms of goals, of what the group is going to produce over a certain period of time. Identity issues are worked through in sequential phases; they are either a means to an end, they have to be dealt with if the group goal is to be achieved, or they are treated as a goal, they are evaluated by the members who

seek to assert their ego.

In groups where the female process is allowed to express itself the emphasis is not on producing or achieving, development is less differentiated: it is not linear or aimed at reaching a particular goal. This notion of linearity is linked with the way we usually think about time.

I am becoming increasingly aware of the way we equate in our culture maturity with old age, whether we are thinking about people, about the wisdom of grand parents, about the archetypal Wise Old Man and Wise Old Woman or whether we are analysing group dynamics: a mature group is one which has gone through many harrowing experiences. In our overemphasis on time and ageing, we also devalue what is young and fresh. I noticed this process in myself, when I discovered that my young sub-personalities, the Little Boy and the School Girl, had a wisdom of their own and were worth listening to.

Since becoming aware of the connections between maturity and age, I have become more sensitive to the analogies between Bennis and Shepard (1961) and a person's life cycle. I can now identify the group's identity crises and anxieties in terms of an adolescent's identity crises before it reaches maturity. Bennis and Shepard use this term to qualify a group which displays a capacity for intelligent action.

Bion's theory of group processes is also based on development but evokes more the evolution of the human species as a whole rather than the development of an individual. The group moves from the

depths of unconscious instinctive levels-characteristics which are also assumed to belong to the pre-historical, primitive hord (as for example in Freud, 1930) - to the conscious rational level of the ego.

It is Srivastva's (1978) theory that the link between small group dynamics and the individual's development is the most explicit. Small group dynamics and their relationships with a wider organisation are based on socialization processes, on comparing such relationships to the socialization of a child within the family.

In this context I do not think that time, as we usually conceive it, is a very useful concept for dealing with female processes. The female in groups does not emerge in time bound, sequential stages of development, it does not rely on notions of maturity and ageing.

In order to convey this non-linearity, I shall refer in the following section of this chapter, to female themes in groups rather than to female stages or phases. This notion of themes help me bring together and connect expressions of female processes which pervade or even transcend the different stages of development referred to in the literature on groups.

The focus in groups where female processes are expressed is on interpersonal relationships. The issue is not about overcoming differences; when female processes emerge, the emphasis is on developing a space which will accommodate the variety of interpersonal relationships, which will leave space for members to be themselves.

In other words relationships are lived with rather than dealt with, the group develops a space rather than develops through time.

The female in groups protects differences but nurtures connectedness. The emphasis is on similarities, on sharing what is inherently common in the experience of the members, on cooperation, on coming together, on being side by side.

II Expressions of the Female Process: General Level

In the previous part of this chapter, by differentiating male and female processes, I am starting to get clearer about the nature of the latter and their rhythms. For me the dimensions of the female processes which are starting to emerge are the notion of gathering together, fusion, encompassing.

I need now to refine my presentation; I do not want to give the impression that female processes are just the opposite to what is described in 'traditional' literature. At an early stage of my inquiry, the dissatisfaction I had experienced with such analyses had given me enough energy for taking new directions in my research, for exploring what belongs to the Feminine. I am now ready to reconciliate myself with these theories which had seem so irritatingly male at first. I can take more distance from their main message and take a fresh look at them.

This gentler second reading of these theories brings to light a few themes which are relevant for expressing the female in groups. When

Bennis and Shepard talk about the role played by the overpersonal members they are evoking for me a female theme.

The overpersonal are defined as being those "who cannot rest until they have stabilized high degree of intimacy with all the others" (Bennis and Shepard, 1961). Intimacy characterizes the female in groups, yet in Bennis and Shepard's theory the overpersonal are regarded as conflicted. They are unlike the independent members who lack the compulsiveness and do not create the communicative confusion so characteristic of the conflicted members. I feel that Bennis and Shepard are devaluing the experience of intimacy in favour of the cool detachment displayed by the independents. For a more positive image of intimacy and positive expression of the female in groups, I turned to Srivastva (1978).

For him, intimacy is a socialization process the whole group has to go through. The varied manifestations of the intimacy process he lists do not solely characterize conflicted behaviours. Srivastva sees expressions of intimacy in:

> closeness or distance, jealousy, warmth, caring, love, liking, joining or dyadic relationships within the group, any intense emotional connection perceived between two members, expressions of sexual fantasies, expressions of messianic fantasies, supportive or mutual intrusion in the other's space, discussion of sex-role relations, questions of gender identity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, considerations of love relationships external or internal to the group, expressions of extreme trust and/or unconditional positive regard. (Srivastva, 1978).

But for Srivastva, these manifestations of intimacy are expressed in the last stage of the socialization of the group. Whereas I think that when female processes emerge, intimacy appears early. I have

been, at times, in the situation of finding myself in a group with women I'd never met before and getting quite intimate with them before we'd even start to inquire about our occupation, marital status or other more mundane information. It seems to me that, using Srivastva's thee aspects of a group's socialization process, the female in groups is more concerned with intimacy before it considers the issue of inclusion or even of influence.

I think it is more appropriate to say that inclusion is achieved through intimacy. This brings me back to the notion of themes which I was describing earlier on as being more relevant for expressing the emergence of female processes than stages or phases. I seem to have mixed up Srivastva's phases in order to present an aspect of the female in groups; this makes me think that, to illustrate this notion of themes further, I could compare their relevance to what Bion has described as 'random shifts'.

Yet Bion refers to the notion of random shifts to analyze psychotic patterns of behaviour within the group. These patterns are regressive, instinctive and swamped by a threatening unconscious.

I do feel that female processes are in touch with the unconscious, but with the rich, creative unconscious described by Randall and Southgate (1980) and above all by Jung. I do not hold the view that the unconscious is unnecessarily punishing or threatening.

I am prepared to acknowledge that these theories are not as grounded in the patriarchal as I had thought, but I still think that it is necessary to reassess, to re-vision some of the labels these social

scientists have used to describe themes which are essentially female. For example the term 'overpersonal' has negative connotations, but it also defines a valuable experience or attitude towards intimacy. In our group (see Chapter 3) we were concerned with intimacy, which may be seen as an 'overpersonal' attitude in Bennis and Shepard's terms, yet I have never felt that our group suffered from arrested development. I also value randomness and chaos; I have learnt during my research that it is fertile and creative, not necessarily frightening.

With all these reservations, I still seem to be presenting female processes in terms of what they are not; it is paradoxical to realize that when I want to focus on female processes they seem to vanish and I have to resort to more differentiation and analysis.

I shall move away from the language of analysis and use myths and symbols hoping that they will be more appropriate for illustrating the manifestations of the female process. I shall be using this perspective in the next part of the chapter.

III Archetypes, Myths and Stories

Up to now, I have only been able to differentiate female processes from male ones. Furthermore I seem to have presented aspects of female processes in rather inactive terms. Then I do not think that, although female processes are in touch with the unconscious, all female manifestations stem from the unconscious.

I need to present more active, initiating aspects of the female process. I shall attempt to do this by using Whitmont's (1980) four aspects of femininity. I shall try to take his analysis of female traits and of the expressions of the anima which Whitmont analyzes at an individual level to the group situation, in order to present female themes, in their own lights. If I am seeing this endeavour as tentative, it is because I have few jungian analyses of group processes to support my ideas.

Most of the jungians works I have encountered ignore group processes or have negative views of group experiences as hindering individual's development (for example Von Franz, 1973). Jung was suspicious of group therapy which he regarded as eliminating the psyche:

> Even a small group is suited by a suggestive group spirit which, when it is good, can have very favourable effects, although at the cost of spiritual and moral independence. The group enhances the ego (...) but the self is diminished and pushed into the background in favour of the average. (Jung, 1970).

Hobson (1959) is the only jungian theorist I am aware of, who considers that, since Jung's notion of individuation has two essential aspects: an internal and subjective processes of integration and an equally indispensible process of objective relationship, the concept of self must include "modes of integration which operate in interpersonal relationships" (Hobson, 1959).

He goes on to suggest that archetypal themes such as the hero, the scapegoat, the anima, the shadow are developed in concrete relationships; they appear in groups as responses to situations affecting the whole group.

I am aware that not all characteristics of femal processes are necessarily archetypal or belong to the anima; yet I shall use the qualities ascribed to Pallas-Athena, Luna, Lila and Medusa in order to present female themes in groups in terms of autonomous processes. The use of images, of the names of the goddesses, of myths and stories may help me to get away from the distortions and devaluing of the language of analysis.

I see Pallas-Athena - the creator, the pioneer who is ready to give battle for the sake of concrete human needs - as protecting the female in groups against the aggression and excesses of the Ares phase in groups. The qualities ascribed to Ares - the warrior, the go getter and his capacity for competing, for grabbing whatever he can get hold-of evoke the fight/fights phase of group development analysed by Bion or the influence stage presented by Srivastva. I discovered recently that in Greek mythology, Athena and Ares are always opposed, that he rarely emerges victorious from their combat. Athena's cool, intelligent courage wins over the thirst for blood and violence displayed by Ares. When she defies him in these terms: "Vain fool Hast thou not yet learned how superior my strength is to thine" (in Graves, 1955), she helps me think about the power of the female process. Athena, in her concern for human values, embodies the 'power from within' described by Starhawk (1982) (see Chapter 6) which has a strength of its own, which can defeat the more flamboyant yet excessive Ares 'power over' theme in groups. Athena in her capacity for destroying old patterns that have outlived their usefulness has also enabled me to write about female processes.

I see Luna - creator of congenial atmosphere and living space, of home an soul - as the Being aspect of groups. In her sense of natural rhythms, in her capacity for empathy, she is the female manifestation of what Randall and Southgate have analyzed in terms of nurturing phase. Through the attentive presence and the grounding she provides the group she fosters Doing, she facilitates the setting off on the Quest for Logos. She is Heart Sorrow who lets go off Parsifal in the Grail myth.

Lila in her playfulness, lightness, her enjoyment of the here and now manifests herself when, as we did in our self-help therapy group, members happily break rules, experiment with new behaviours, celebrate and delight in each other's company. The Lila theme is expressed when members abandon their quest for maturity and become spontaneous fools in the best sense of the term.

Medusa - the abyss of transformation, the receptive introversion - inspires creative groups: those which respect intuition and the creativity of unconscious processes; she is the mysterious aspect of group experience. At times she instigates fusion: the feeling of tuning into others' experience. At other times she paralyses the group, terrifying whoever is not prepared to befriend her. These negative and positive aspects of the Medusa theme in groups are echoed in Greek myth. After she was killed by Perseus, it is said that with what had been drawn from her left side, Asclepius the physician, could raise the dead or save lives; with what had been drawn from her right side, he could destroy instantly.

When I started writing about these manifestations of female

processes, I wondered whether, for example, I was rewriting Randall and Southgate's theory (1980) translating phases of Nurturing, Energising, Peak, Relaxing into female themes. Where were, for instance, the differences between the Nurturing Phase and Luna themes or between Peak and Lila? I was asking myself.

I now see a difference between the two. Randall and Southgate talk of linear phases of development where each phase is dealt with at a time and prepares the group members for the work to be achieved in the following phase. Female themes emerge more randomly and independently from each other. In other words I see no sequential relationships between the four main themes I have presented: the emergence of a Lila theme may be followed by any of the other expressions of the female in groups.

The next idea which germinated in my mind when I started worrying about presenting just another version of Randall and Southgate's theory was a spontaneous "so what ?"

Underlying this reaction is the idea that with my translation, I have re-visioned group processes, I have given back to the goddesses what belongs to them. For me this re-visioning process means paying attention, acknowledging female themes in groups, especially when these themes are given other names in the academic literature. As I see it, we need to foster any manifestation of the female, we need more of the Feminine in our society; this may be achieved by paying tribute to the goddesses everytime we recognize their expression in our consciousness or ways of relating and behaving in groups.

If I cannot explain any further the manifestations of female processes in groups, I can illustrate them with an account of an event where I have felt the presence of female themes, where both male and female principles were relating with each other.

Female processes were expressed at the Live Aid concert given in July 1985 to raise funds to relieve famine in Ethiopia. The whole event was grounded in a Yin, Luna concern for restoring balance and equilibrium in the world. Yet, for the concert to take place at all, an enormous amount of preparation, organisation and goal orientated attitudes was required. I have also witnessed the presence of Athena who through tens of thousands of people gathered in Wembley Stadium demanded with dignity and self righteousness that justice should be done, that the world should be fed. I was unable to attend the concert (I watched it on television) I regret it since friends who were there reported a tremendous feeling of fusion of joy and togetherness which they thought were unusual in a group of strangers.

My story brings me back to my difficulty with finding a language for expressing the female in groups. It makes me think that it may be easier to notice the presence of females processes with the help of a language which is not based on words, through music for instance. In the next section, I shall present symbols which express for me female and male processes in their own rights, it will be my way of getting away from words.

IV Symbols

As a symbol for female processes, I have chosen the spiral. This choice was made recently after careful consideration of alternative symbols, at an intellectual level.

Then my account of the Live Aid concert and my reflections on the language of music, its appropriateness for expressing the female process brought back the memory of a dance workshop I attended a few years ago.

This workshop was organised within the context of our monthly postgraduate research seminars, where staff and students meet to discuss issues that are relevant to their research. The aim of this one day dance workshop was to explore ways of expressing and dancing our research. This was achieved progressively through several phases of preliminary work. We spent a long time warming up and discovering different ways of dancing, then we drew our dances finally using words to share our experience with the rest of the group. Towards the end of the afternoon we were ready to dance our research; we worked in pairs the other person representing our research topic, during this exercise my movements developed into a spiral. This spiral dance started as soon as I decided to hold hands and face (the person who was enacting) my research. We started moving round, reaching great speed within seconds, we carried on like this, until I was thrown on the floor, uttering a cry of terror. This spiral dance had brought me a terrifying sense of emptiness but also of a openness and space.

This experience did not make much sense at the time and I gradually forgot what had happened but I now realize that what I have struggled with at an intellectual level more recently, had come 'naturally' to me at an earlier stage. Through another medium I had already discovered qualities of the female processes such as space and openness and a way of symbolizing them.

The use of archetypes and stories have restored my confidence in the possibility of expressing female processes, in their own rights. Although I do not need to resort to more differentiation and probably because of it, I shall now present a symbol which portray the male process. I can acknowledge its power and strength without fearing that its expression is going to obscure the female process.

The male process is arrowlike. It gets its power from tension which, when it is released, gives it direction and strength. I used Whitmont's (1980) four ways of developing masculinity and animus tendencies to summarize briefly the different stages of group development which are analyzed in the 'traditional' literature.

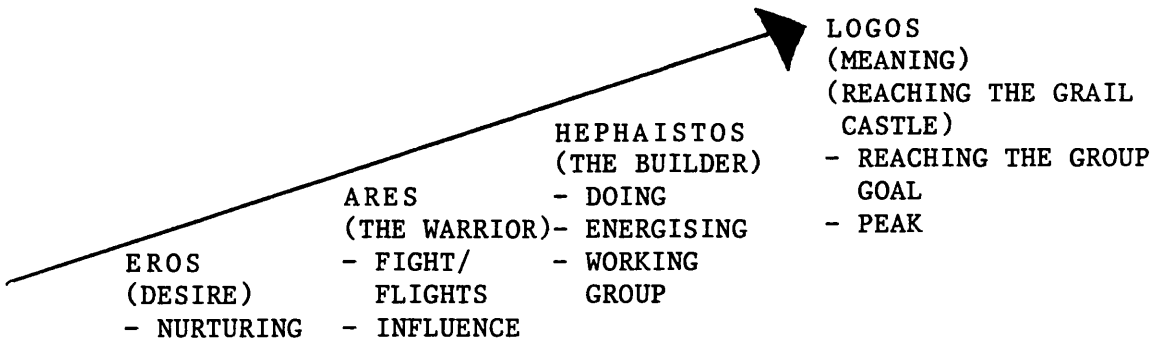

Figure 11.1: A symbol for the male process mapping its phases of development

What belongs to the Feminine is often symbolized by a circle to reflect her wholeness. I prefer to use the spiral, a symbol which is akin to the circle but which also portrays the openness of female processes.

The spiral is found in a natural state in the vegetable and animal kingdom (vine, shells, snails); it is a symbol encountered in all cultures usually linked to the cosmic symbolism of the moon or to the fertility of the womb, representing the repeated rhythms of life. The spiral evokes "extension, development, cyclical continuity, creational rotation" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1974; my translation). For me, its non linearity, endless development and redefinition of the space it creates seems to capture the essence of what I have tried to say in the previous sections of this chapter.

I have placed on the following spiral, the different themes and expressions of the female process randomly: there is no particular significance in where they are situated on the symbol.

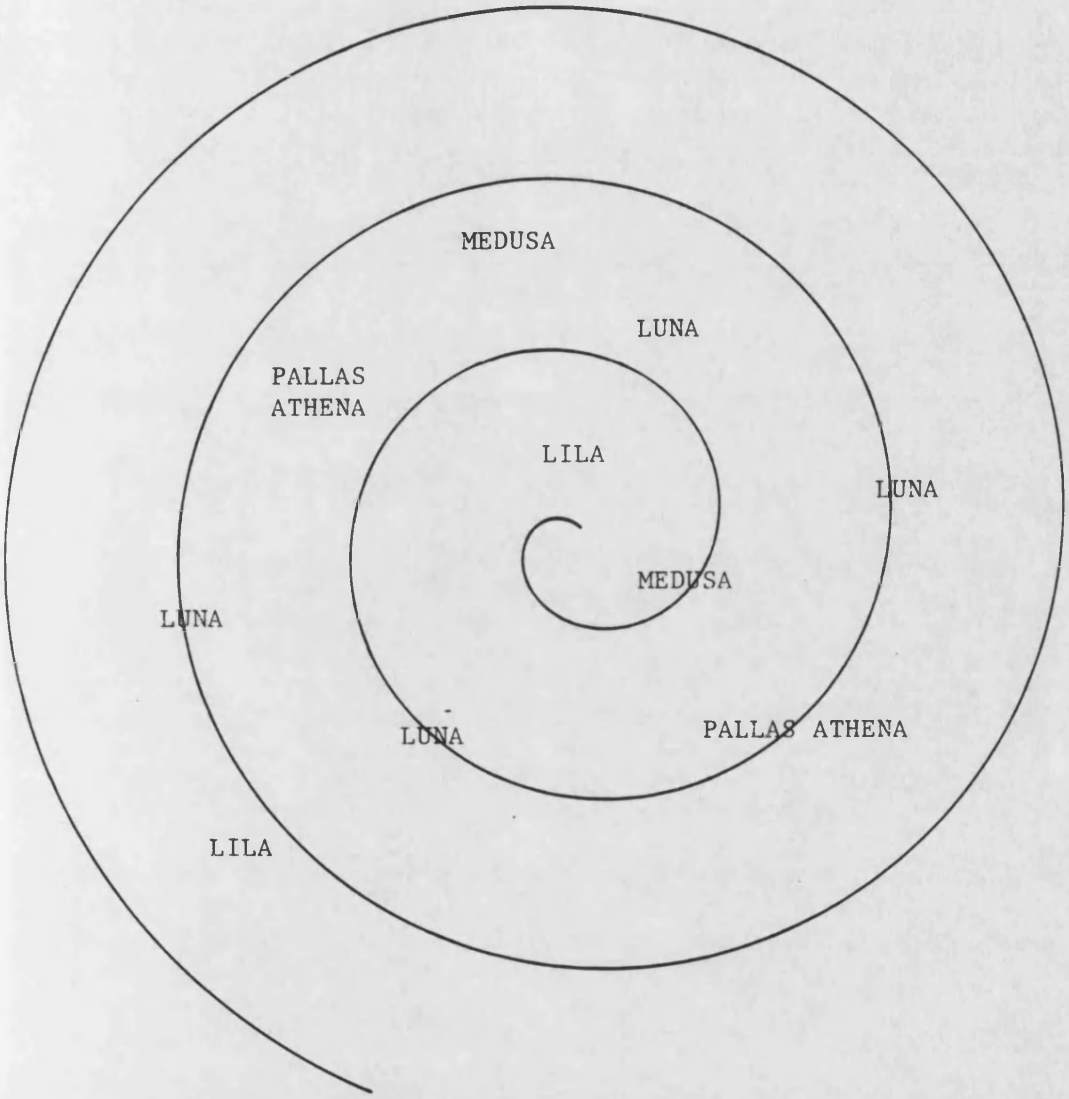

Figure 11.2: A symbol for the female process in groups and non linear expression of its themes

After dealing with myths and symbols I am ready to part with my thesis. I am aware that I could go on expanding this inquiry, I could do more empirical work on the manifestations of the female processes. I could also do more research into the possibilities of dialogue between male and female processes and on the interrelationships between the different female themes I have presented. But I need to stop here, to return to the outside world and find ways, whatever I shall do next, of protecting and advocating the place of the Feminine in our lives. However I cannot set off on my new journey without presenting what I shall take with me. In the final section of this chapter I shall briefly present some ideas which, although they are not immediately relevant to the female in groups belong to this last chapter.

V Personal Conclusions

With my exploration of female processes, from my surrender to their expression, to Medusa, to the abyss of transformation also embodied in my Red Witch subpersonality, I have discovered many sides to our humanity: the soul, the spiritual, the imaginal, the archetypal.

The feminine principle with its richness, chaotic and fertile creativity has liberated me: I have accessed new realms of experience and realized that my choices were only limited by me and my perceptions of the world.

I am emerging from my research exhausted but free.

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